



Some patients wait in ambulance for an hour at hospital

CONCERN OVER DELAYS AT A&E

Report by Luke Bartlett

NEARLY 300 patients waited more than half an hour in ambulances outside Russells Hall Hospital during March, according to new figures.

A total of 288 people had to wait more than 30 minutes in ambulances outside the Dudley hospital and 35 waited for more than one hour.

Council bosses say Dudley's NHS trust needs to work with West Midlands Ambulance Service and other partners to tackle the problem at the accident and emergency department.

The trust says it has faced a five per cent rise in the number of ambulance attendances compared to the same period last year but it has improved in recent months.

Councillor Rachel Harris said: "The only way this can move forward is by all the hospitals, the ambulance service and other emergency services getting around a table and talking to each other.

"It needs more planning, more financing and more clear clinical leadership."

Target

So far this year there have been more than 1,400 breaches of the NHS 30-minute ambulance handover target at the hospital. In January 691 patients waited for more than 30 minutes with the figure at 448 in February.

Trust bosses said they have seen progress and had 'outperformed' other trusts in the Black Country on patient handover performance.

Karen Kelly, chief operating officer at Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, said: "We have seen progress in our handover times, which have significantly improved since December. At times we have outperformed other trusts in the Black Country.

"We have a plan in place to continue to reduce handover times further. We work closely with our colleagues at West Midlands Ambulance Service to make sure that patients who arrive by ambulance at A&E are assessed, treated and handed over as quickly and efficiently as possible.

"The pressure on our emergency services has been consistent throughout the last 12 months. The volume of ambulances were, at times, very challenging."

FLYING THE FLAG AT VE DAY CELEBRATIONS



Museum staff Alison Hyatt and Anne Willetts get ready for the 1940s event at Haden Hill House and Park on Monday afternoon

HALESOWEN folk are being invited to celebrate VE Day with a special 1940s themed event on Bank Holiday Monday.

The Fabulous 40s event is at Haden Hill House and Park, in Cradley Heath, from 12 noon with plenty to see and do as the victory celebrations for the end of the Second World War in Europe are recreated.

Jane Hanney, Sandwell Council's museum services manager, said: "There will be loads of costumed characters, a tea van which visitors can take a peep at and a World War II soldier's display.

"There also will be a uniform display but beware of the spiv who may try to sell you some black market goods.

"Visitors will also be able to enjoy historic vehicles out in the park with some lovely examples from the period and learn about food rationing inside the house. Try some wartime recipes and see some real wartime objects."

In the park, there will be rousing live swing music from the Halesowen-based Steve King Big Band.

Alison Hyatt, visitor services officer, said: "We are encouraging people to bring a pic-

nic and enjoy the afternoon listening to the music. For younger visitors there will be traditional entertainment with a Punch and Judy show and street magic for people to be amazed at.

"Haden Old Hall will also be open for visitors to look around and see the evacuees bedroom. It is believed evacuees stayed on site before they were found homes locally during the war."

Entrance is free. For further information call 01384 569444 or visit www.sandwell.gov.uk/joininmuseums website.

COUNCIL

Dog mess penalty doubles to £100

A NEW order which penalises dog owners who fail to pick up after their pets has come into force.

The new Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) gives Dudley Council officers powers to give out fixed penalty notices for dog fouling.

The fines are up to £100 – double the previous £50.

The order also prohibits dogs in children's play areas, with similar punishment for owners flouting the regulations.

FIRE

Staff evacuated during store blaze

STAFF were evacuated from an Oldbury supermarket after a fire started in the storage area.

Fire crews from Oldbury and Smethwick attended the Co-op store, Tame Road, at around 4pm on Monday.

Five members of staff were evacuated from the store in Kingsway, after the fire is believed to have started in a storage room.

TRAFFIC

No stopping order to ease congestion

VEHICLES will be banned from stopping on several busy roads in Dudley in a bid to ease congestion.

Dudley Council has introduced traffic orders which will ban vehicles from waiting at the side of the road. The measure will be brought in at the junction of Dixon Green Road and Bean Road and at the junction of Laurel Road, Limes Road and Meadow Road in Dudley. Waiting has also been banned on parts of Dudley Road in Wall Heath, near the junction with High Street.

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GOING CRAZY AT THE GRAND



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Golden day as city plans Wolves party



Danny Bath with the trophy

GOLDEN glory returned to Molineux as Wolves lifted the Championship trophy in front of a roaring home crowd at Molineux.

Thousands of supporters watched the players and manager collect their title-winning silverware at the packed stadium on Saturday.

The players and manager Nuno Espirito Santo were presented with the trophy and medals after Wolves' last home game of the season, a goalless draw with Sheffield Wednesday. It came a week after Wolves officially won the title with an away win at Bolton.

Almost 30,000 fans packed into Molineux and stayed for the presentation, which took place in front of the North Bank stand.

Wolves will celebrate their promotion to the Premier League with an open top bus parade in the city centre and in West Park up to 30,000 fans will greet their heroes at a huge free party on bank Holiday Monday, May 7.

The club are back in the Premier League after a six-year absence and have been locked in talks with council bosses over how to mark the achievement.

The day will start with a private

civic reception hosted by deputy mayor, Councillor Phil Page. Then two open top buses carrying players and staff will set off from Wolverhampton Art Gallery on Lichfield Street at noon.

Fans will line the route as the buses travel through the city to West Park where fans can greet their heroes, with Nuno and the players set to address the crowd and show off the Championship trophy. Celebrations will continue through the afternoon. The park event sold out its 30,000 tickets within an hour on Tuesday but will be shown on a giant screen in Queen Square.

Hundreds join Albion fun day for Richard

'HE touched thousands of hearts at West Bromwich Albion'.

That is how Baggies caretaker boss Darren Moore summed up club star Richard Eades at a fun day held in his memory at Halesowen Town's Grove ground on Sunday.

Big Dave took charge of an Albion Legends XI at the event - just 24 hours after leading the Baggies to their second win under his stewardship. The 1-0 win at Newcastle also bolstered Baggies' hopes of Premier League survival.

Richard Eades

Hundreds of people attended the event at The Grove to remember the former Albion mascot, which involved an It's A Knock-out style match between football club mascots and culminated in a match between fans' team Boing FC, which Richard used to play for, and the Albion Legends.

Tribute

Darren said: "It was a wonderful tribute for a wonderful man. He touched lots of hearts - thousands of hearts at West Bromwich Albion."

"The fact so many people attended epitomises the person he was. Players, staff, fans and the community, we all turned out to come and support his family for a wonderful cause."

"Richard was a warming, approachable man who would have done anything for you. He would always lend himself to any situation that he was in and nothing was ever too much to ask. He always had a



Mascots with Richard's sister-in-law Debbie Mason, mother Susan, children Archie and Lily, partner Carly and father Arthur

wonderful smile on his face. I was delighted to turn out to support his family."

Richard, from Wednesbury, died in December aged just 42. He worked in various roles at The Hawthorns but is best remembered for his time as mascot 'Albi' - putting on the costume for over a decade from 2007.

The fun day was organised by his pal Dave Challenger, better known as Baggie Bird. The day began with an It's A Knockout-style tournament,

which was won by a team made up of Richard's friends.

Richard's partner of 18 years Carly Evans said: "It was emotional but nice to see so many people turned out for him. It just goes to show that more people out there knew what a great bloke he was."

"He was all for his family and his friends. He would do anything for anybody. And he loved his football. West Brom have been unbelievable, from agreeing to meet the kids and

their support for the fun day."

Among the Baggies stars to attend were former strikers Geoff Horsfield and Andy Johnson. Geoff said: "I think it says a massive amount about Rich, everybody loved him around the club and it just proves that." Andy added: "The lads have done Eadesy proud. The turn-out is a testament to the character of the bloke and to his family and friends. He was a well loved guy around the Black Country."

Hepatitis leaflet claim candidate is suspended

A CONSERVATIVE election candidate in Dudley borough has been suspended from the party after publishing a leaflet claiming Labour rivals had given a council ward hepatitis.

Kamran Razzaq, the Conservative candidate for Cradley and Wollescote, distributed the leaflet to constituents in the ward, which is currently held by Labour's Tim Crumpton.

Mr Razzaq asked in the leaflet: "What have Labour delivered to this ward?" Before listing one of the answers as 'hepatitis'. The leaflet also goes on to dismiss UKIP.

Mr Razzaq has been suspended from the party over the leaflet but will still contest today's (Thursday's) election. His name will appear on the ballot paper alongside the Conservative logo as this cannot be changed once nominations close, a Conservative spokesman confirmed.

The leader of the Conservatives at Dudley Council, Councillor Patrick Harley, said: "He has been suspended from the party and an investigation is on-going. It would be wrong to comment further at this stage."

Criticism

The leaflet has drawn criticism from Labour councillors in the borough, as well as members of the UKIP in Dudley.

Dudley's Labour leader, Councillor Pete Lowe, said: "It is one of the rare occasions that words fail me. It is probably one of the most disgraceful pieces of political literature I have seen in the years I have been politically active."

"I welcome the fact that the local Conservative MP, Margot James, apologised very quickly and the fact that he was suspended from the party."

"Politics should be better than this." UKIP Councillor Dean Perks said it was the 'most disgusting thing' he had ever seen on a political leaflet.

He added: "For a candidate or for anyone to accuse a political party or anyone of delivering hepatitis is beyond the pale. It really is taking politics to a new low. It is a shame this has happened in Dudley."

Mr Razzaq is a former Labour member who crossed to the Conservatives.

In 2016 he contested the Wordsley seat on Dudley Council for the Tories.

The leaflet appears to refer to a recent hepatitis outbreak in Lye.

Join Jean for town centre poetry tour

A POET is leading a free tour around Stourbridge town centre next Saturday.

'Making Poems for Stourbridge' on May 12, and is a poetry workshop walk around landmarks with Jean Atkin, from Stourbridge Library at 1.30pm. Book on (01384) 815 555 or 812945.

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CUT THIS OUT AND KEEP, PASS TO FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Coach pays tribute to club rugby player, 14

DEVASTATED members of Stourbridge Rugby Club have paid tribute to a young player who died last week.

Thomas Mole, aged 14, from Wollaston, lost his short but bravely fought battle on Thursday, April 26, leaving parents Simon and Rachel and little sister Poppy.

The Oldswinford Hospital school pupil was a Stourbridge Rugby Club under-14s player and was described by his coaches as a 'true warrior' who would do anything for his teammates.

In a statement on Stourbridge Rugby Club website, coach Chris Roe said: "Throughout his years with his team mates Tom flourished into a massively physical and combative Number Eight. He was a true warrior and would do anything for his team mates. The Number 8 will be retired in his honour and replaced with a T."

"These times shouldn't happen to our kids, but the world can be a cruel place at times. The messages of support they have already received from the rugby family both near and far have been truly humbling and these will be of great comfort."

Thomas was looked after by staff at Birmingham Children's Hospital and a Just Giving page has just been set up for donations to the hospital in his memory. Visit justgiving.com/fundraising/srfu14

The club held a minute of applause in his honour at Saturday's game.

More contacting their GP online

MORE than 300,000 patients in the Black Country are now using GP services online.

Figures reveal 316,000 patients in the region now book appointments, request repeat prescriptions and view their records using either a smartphone, tablet, laptop or PC.

NHS Digital statistics from February 2018 show, on average, 26,000 appointments are made or cancelled online every month in the Black Country.

More than 34,000 prescriptions are also ordered online.

GP practices are consequently seeing fewer people failing to attend appointments because it's easy to reschedule online.

Civil war hero talk

A TALK on English Civil War Royalist hero Prince Rupert is being held by Friends of Dudley Archives and Local History Service at the archives in Tipton Road tonight (Thursday) at 7.30pm. £2.

Sky's the limit as students land jobs



Six of the successful students at Halesowen College who already have jobs

TRAVEL and tourism students are celebrating their success after landing jobs before even leaving college.

A record number of second year students at Halesowen College have secured positions in the industry before they finish their studies.

Students have gained employment at Tui Retail in Merry Hill, cabin crew positions at Thomas Cook Airlines, front of house jobs at the Rowton Hotel in Wolverhampton and Brewers Fayre in Stourbridge, Dudley Zoo, and customer service jobs at Birmingham Airport. Other students have secured places at

university to study for degrees in their chosen subject, including airport and aviation management, as well as working on degrees and volunteering overseas.

Sam Little, curriculum team manager for travel, said: "Year on year, we have students who have already got jobs before they leave college. We are delighted to see them do so well and we do all we can to inspire them while they are here."

"Many of our past students, now working in the industry, come back talk to current students about their experiences."

Closing in on motorists who endanger cyclists

A SAFER driving scheme has rolled out onto the roads in Dudley borough for the first time in the project's two-year history.

Officers from the West Midlands Police Road Harm Reduction unit held the Close Pass scheme in Long Lane, Halesowen.

Undercover officers used a Boardman Hybrid road bike equipped with full HD cameras and walkie-talkies to pick up drivers passing too close to the bike.

But this was more than just a way of dishing out licence points and a fine, say police chiefs, who, with the help of the fire service, instead gave on-the-spot advice to those caught.

A special mat was set up to deliver a lesson to motorists about the distance recommended to keep cyclists safe - which, according to Pc Steve Hudson, is the width of a lorry door.

Pc Hudson said: "It is not about going after drivers and it is not about prosecuting or persecuting. It is about education and driver awareness and cycling awareness."

Behaviour

"Before we started this scheme we spent over two years with cycling groups looking at their behaviour on the road and looking at things that were causing them problems on the road. It is about changing driver behaviour. We want to send that person away thinking 'I am actually now better armed and equipped to deal with a vulnerable road user'."

"I will explain to the motorist that they have passed the cyclist too closely. It is an offence but, instead of sending them away with something that they may not learn from, we want to arm them better to deal with cyclists in the future."

"What generally happens is the longer you drive safely on the road without incident the narrower your field of vision becomes and you become very complacent."

David Viner, from Halesowen Cycling Club, was present to support the scheme. He said: "I think the Close Pass initiative is fantastic. Most motorists overtake cyclists reasonably well but a lot of people just need to be reminded that cyclists do need room on the road."



Pc Mark Hodson, safety officer Peter Swanwick, watch commander Paul Stephens and Pc Steve Hudson



Pc Mark Hodson takes a cyclist to test motorists



A motorbike officer keeps a watchful eye on motorists

NEWS IN BRIEF

Planners defer micro bar decision

PLANNING chiefs have deferred an application to transform a shop into a micro bar in Tividale.

Sandwell Council's planning committee deferred a decision until its next meeting when it is to receive further information.

The planning application has been lodged to turn a convenience store into a micro bar at 45 to 47 Regent Road, in Tividale. It would be open between midday and 11.30pm Sunday to Thursday, and midday to 12.30am on Fridays and Saturdays.

Letters of objection have raised concerns about noise, parking, anti-social behaviour and rubbish.

Furniture store is closing down

A WELL-KNOWN Black Country furniture store is closing down.

William & Sons, in Level Street, Brierley Hill, has announced its closure after 21 years.

Managing director William Cole said: "It is with great sadness and a very heavy heart that I have taken the decision to begin the process of closing down our store. After considering all possible options, we know this is the right course of action."

Mr Cole said the death of his father and an 'extremely challenging' market were factors behind the closure.

Traders battle to save last branch

A PETITION set up by traders in a bid to save Brierley Hill's last town centre bank has more than 1,000 signatures.

The planned closure of Lloyds Bank will leave the High Street with no banks - after HSBC and Barclays branches closed.

Brierley Hill market supervisor Steven Bridgewater started the petition, which has been supported by traders and shoppers. He is planning to present it later this month in a bid to persuade Lloyds bosses into making a U-turn.

£2,000 prize joy for a postcode winner

ONE lucky Dudley household is celebrating their good fortune after winning a double cash prize with the People's Postcode Lottery.

The Limepit Lane winner, using the postcode DY1 3DS, saw the daily prize money doubled to £2,000 on April 24 as they played with two tickets.

Danyl Johnson, People's Postcode Lottery ambassador, said a minimum of 32 per cent of ticket sales goes to charities, including Dudley Mind.



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More police officers to get body cameras

Force deploy HD drones



Three drones with HD cameras have been bought by West Midlands Police

POLICE have taken to the skies to test out new drones equipped with high-definition cameras, which will be used to fight crime in the West Midlands.

Officers from West Midlands Police are now using the latest 'eye-in-the-sky' technology to target criminals and keep a watch on unfolding events with a bird's eye view.

The unmanned aerial vehicles – UAVs – were in action above Millennium Point in Birmingham, for a demonstration and were deployed during last week's serious flooding in Wednesbury.

The force has purchased three drones and paid for seven officers to be trained to operate them using £28,000 raised from assets seized from convicted criminals.

BODY cameras are to be rolled out to 2,400 more police officers in the West Midlands, at a cost of almost £4 million.

An extra 110 head cameras will also be purchased for officers attending public events.

It comes after a successful trial when 1,617 body cameras and 263 head cameras were given to frontline response officers three years ago.

The latest move has been unveiled by Assistant Chief Constable Kenny Bell at a meeting of the force's strategic policing and crime board.

He said the cameras had increased the number of people charged in relation to crimes by 12 per cent and the number of suspects pleading guilty to offences at an early stage by nine per cent.

Complaints

It has also resulted in a 46 per cent drop in complaints in Wolverhampton, he added. ACC Bell said: "It is now intended to extend the roll out of cameras to neighbourhood and other operation teams such as force traffic and force support units."

The extra cameras will cost £3.8m to roll out over the next five years. The force will also spend £1.4m on storage and licences.

ACC Bell said work was also being done to allow data from the cameras to securely be transferred directly to the Crown Prosecution Service.

Security means only individual officers can access their footage along with their supervisors, investigators and specialist departments.

Around 15,800 videos are uploaded from officer cameras every month, and 12,800 images. Around a quarter of videos and 80 per cent of images are kept for evidence.

Board member Dr Lynette Kelly, a Coventry councillor, said: "Body-worn cameras are increasing confidence in policing."

May's beautiful array of bluebells



Zac Brookes, 15, of Keeper's Cottage, admiring the bluebell woods ahead of this weekend's opening in aid of charities

A BLUEBELL wood near Stourbridge is opening to the public on Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday as part of the National Garden Scheme (NGS).

The beautiful May array of flowers can be visited at Keeper's Cottage woods, on Greensforge Lane, at Stourton, by permission of Peter and Jenny Brookes.

This is the third year of opening the woods to the public

and the Brookes' have raised more than £4,000 as part of the NGS scheme, which helps several charities and nationally has raised more than £50 million.

Over the past two years more than 1,200 nature lovers have visited Greensforge Lane to walk through the woods and enjoy tea and cakes sold from the Keeper's Cottage kitchen, all made by local people.

Force recruit specials again

WEST Midlands Police are recruiting volunteer police officers to their Special Constabulary for the first time in four years.

Recruitment opened last week as the force seek to boost numbers to support both day-to-day policing, as well as major events coming to the region in the next few years. It is the force's first step towards getting ready for the Commonwealth Games in 2020 and volunteers will play a huge part in delivering a safe, secure and enjoyable event.

The force is looking to recruit specials and volunteers from all the diverse communities across the West Midlands.

Chris Thurley, assistant director in people and organisation development, said: "Our special constables are a huge part of the West Midlands Police family. Last year they volunteered over 30,000 hours to support the service we offer the public."

"They are integral members of our neighbourhood teams, our front line response teams, helping to support

our most vulnerable victims in public protection, force CID, operations, motorway policing – the opportunities are endless.

"We are looking to increase our number as we gear up for some of the biggest events to be seen in the West Midlands, like Coventry becoming City of Culture in 2021 and, of course, Birmingham hosting the Commonwealth Games in 2022."

Closing date for applications is Sunday. Visit jobs.west-midlands.police.uk website.

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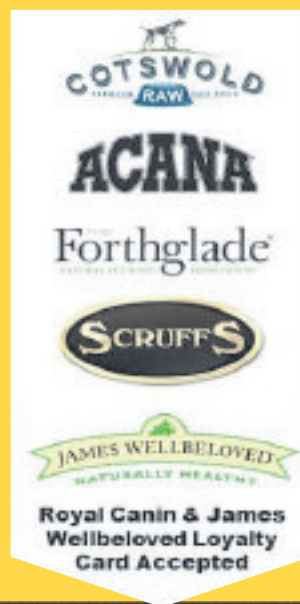
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Under-fire car wash scheme is put on hold for site visit

PLANNING chiefs have requested to visit the site of a planned hand car wash in Oldbury, before granting approval.

Sandwell Council's planning committee deferred the application at their meeting which took place last Wednesday in order to visit the proposed site, before any decision was made.

The plans are for a hand cash wash on vacant land adjacent to Dudley Road East, in Tividale. The site had previously been a petrol station.

Merger of shop giants is halted

THE merger of the owners of Merry Hill shopping centre and Birmingham's Bull Ring and Grand Central will definitely not go ahead.

Last week the board of shopping centres group Hammerson withdrew its recommendation that its shareholders vote in favour of its all-share offer for Intu Properties.

Hammerson's offer was conditional on the approval of its shareholders and Intu has decided there is now no realistic prospect that this condition would be satisfied.

Intu group company secretary Susan Marsden said the board had determined not to proceed.

"The board of Intu is entirely confident of Intu's stand-alone commercial future and prospects," added Mrs Marsden.

It is proposed it would be open seven days a week, including bank holidays, between the hours of 7am and 8pm. The plans include five car parking spaces and the scheme will provide jobs for four people. The site is near a car repairs and recovery garage and residential properties.

Resident Faisal Rafi raised objections to the proposal at the meeting. He said: "There will be a rise in parked cars near to homes. There will be noise pollution during long periods of the day and during unsociable hours.

Flooding

"There will be an extensive water waste - we already have a problem with flooding, so any car wash will make the situation worse. It will increase the amount of traffic on the private road opposite. It will reduce the amount of parking and create major access issues for homeowners and emergency services.

"There are already three car washes nearby - we don't need another one." Applicant, Mukesh Gangotra, said: "I am trying to eliminate problems with the site by putting a business there - I think it is better for the area."

Councillors requested a site visit before making any further decision. A site visit will be arranged before the next meeting, scheduled in June.

£140,000 bill for horses to be seized



Horses near the entrance to the accident and emergency department at Russells Hall Hospital

DOZENS of horses are being seized in Dudley and Sandwell by a horse rescue firm paid £140,000 a year.

Equine Emergency Services, based in Bridgnorth, seized 45 horses in Dudley and 30 in Sandwell last year.

It is contracted by the councils in a bid to clear roads and open spaces of tethered and stray horses. The firm then charges £400 for the owners to reclaim the animals. It also rehomes the horses.

The firm's website features appeals for the owners for 38 horses seized in the two boroughs over the past year. They include eight seized in one day off the Birmingham New Road in Dudley and five from Hall Lane in Tipton.

Five were also picked up from the Fens Pool Nature Reserve in Brierley Hill. The horses range in age and types with black cobs, piebalds and skewbalds. The work of the company was raised by the office of the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner this week. The firm's work has seen the number of stray horses reduced. In Dudley, 145 horses were seized a year.

Brierley Hill Councillor John Martin said five years ago up to 70 horses were tethered on the 30-acre Fens Pool Nature Reserve at a time. He said: "Dudley Council was compelled to act because of the destruction of the nature reserve and cruelty to the animals, some of them left to starve."

Ambulance staff facing more attacks

ATTACKS on ambulance staff in the West Midlands have almost doubled in five years with just 20 per cent of offenders punished.

West Midlands Ambulance Service workers suffered 325 physical assaults in 2017/18, up from 175 in 2012/13.

But of the 1,597 attacks across the six years, just 20 per cent led to police or court action, 324 cases. Civil actions such as warning letters were sent out in 10 per cent of the cases, 158.

The figures have come from union GMB, which has compiled the number of attacks from all ambulance services in the country. They also rose 34 per cent in the five years.

Examples of violent attacks reported by GMB members include being bitten, stabbed and having blood spat at them by drug users.

This came ahead of a vote by MPs on tougher sentences for attacks on emergency workers, which would require courts to treat attacks on emergency workers as an aggravating factor for sentencing.

Cycling club open day plan for park

A CYCLING club is hosting an open day next weekend to encourage more residents to get on their bikes.

Stourbug Cycling Club will host the event on Saturday, May 12, at the Activity Centre in Mary Steven's Park, between 12 noon and 3pm.

The event will offer the chance to find out more about cycling with the club, as well as Brockmoor Community Cycling Club who cater for beginners. Stourbug was founded in 2007, by Russell and Nicky Eden, and now has a membership of more than 250, offering rides to suit all abilities. Free bike checks will be available.

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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



So Prince Louis just what is in a name?

SO Prince Louis it is, then, the latest addition to the Cambridge household. Yes, I know he is named after Louis Mountbatten, the Duke of Edinburgh's uncle murdered by terrorists in 1979, but it doesn't sound right does it? A bit too reminiscent of King Louis XVI of France, perhaps. And things didn't end terribly well for him.

Anyway, I guess that means I will have to wait until next time for one of the Cambridge children to be named with my personal choice, Austin.

Austin Cambridge. A wonderful ring to it, don't you think?

□ □ □

THE moment I saw the picture of Sohail Khan, the rapper turned would-be councillor for Tettenhall, I knew this would be entertaining. Whether it's William Hague's baseball cap or Jeremy Corbyn hanging out with grime stars, there is always something cringeworthy about politicians trying to get "down with da kids". And while I am not familiar with Mr Khan's contribution to the music industry, I would be surprised if it were not more Ali G than Ice.

Now rude-boy Sohail finds himself in hot water, after it emerged he posted a picture of a pistol on Facebook in 2012. Councillor Martin Waite says he is "not fit for office" and is "glamorising gun crime". Oh, gerrover yerself, as we say in the Black Country. These people don't half take themselves seriously, don't they?

If Councillor Waite thinks Mr Khan is glamorising anything whatsoever, he probably needs to get out more. While I don't profess to be entirely representative of da yute in da 'hood, I'm fairly sure there are few things less glamorous than local council politics. Mr Khan has probably done more to de-glamorise guns with his Facebook post than the Home Office has managed in decades. Respect, bruv.

□ □ □

THERE are few people who cannot have been moved by the tragic last days of Alfie Evans, and you have to sympathise with medical staff who, faced with some thankless and difficult decisions, had to deal with a torrent of unwarranted abuse and intimidation.

That said, while it may be right for highly-skilled medics to refuse treatment they believe is not in the interests of the child, the litigation to stop him going to Italy is something else. The NHS is supposed to be about providing health care, not using the legal system to stop sick children going abroad for care if it is what the parents wish. And the NHS surely has more pressing needs for its funds than hiring expensive lawyers.

Lighten up, we need our Royal Family for some things



Kate – denounced by tabloid for looking "too perfect" as she posed with her baby



Farmer Stephen Nolan won a lot of support for his sign about smelly animals



Master Sergeant Robin Brown sacked after dinosaur hand-puppet incident

But who would plant all those saplings . . .

THERE was some speculation that William and Kate's little boy who arrived this week might have been overdue and born late. A republican reader asks: "Late for what?" He goes on to say uncharitable things about this privileged little chap being able to look forward to 80 years or more spent doing absolutely nothing of any consequence. Oh, lighten up. If it wasn't for our Royal Family, who would plant all those saplings, watch all that ethnic dancing and draw apart the little curtains to reveal all those plaques?

THE Duchess of Cambridge appears outside the clinic with her newborn prince and is denounced by one tabloid for looking "too perfect." How can normal mums, with no nannies or hairdressers on call, expect to look so lovely? Listen. As any David Icke fan and conspiracy theorist knows, the Windsor are not humans but giant, shape-shifting lizards. We should be thankful that Kate merely looked radiant and did not come down the clinic steps as a rampaging komodo dragon clutching a large egg.

THE BBC describes a breakthrough in laboratory-grown food as "the veggie burger that bleeds when you cut it." Coming soon – mushrooms that scream when you peel 'em.

'TIS the season to be painting. As I may have pointed out earlier, some paint names convey little about the colour in the tin. From one leading range we have discovered Overtly Olive, Sophisticated Sage and the deeply enigmatic Wellbeing.

I WAS skinning a brontosaurus outside my cave the other day when the news came in of the TSB online-banking catastrophe. I admit-

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



ted in this column some months ago that I had never dabbled with internet banking because I have no desire to link my worldly wealth to the dark forest of thieves we call cyberspace. I was promptly denounced by one reader as a cave man. This week I would rather be a cave man than a TSB online banker, thanks.

MY piece on blood-pressure reminds a reader of an appointment with his GP when his pressure readings were a bit high. The doctor suggested he should relax, sit down for 10 minutes and read a newspaper. It was the Daily Mail. As he puts it: "You can guess the rest."

CONFUSING headlines of our time: "Man bitten by shark previously attacked by bear and snake." (Sky News).

I CAME across a brief report that Bill and Sylvia Bennett of Kidderminster have celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. It said that Bill spent D-Day, June 6, 1944 on a "secret operation" on the Normandy beaches. There was much more to it than that. I met Bill, 91, on a pilgrimage to Normandy some years ago and his D-Day story was astonishing. For a start he was only 18, a Merchant Navy lad put into Royal Navy uniform for the invasion. Secondly, working under enemy fire on the Pluto undersea pipeline at Gold Beach, he was not given any sort of weapon. Thirdly, having helped a wounded comrade to safety, he got a Mentioned in Dispatches for bravery and good conduct. He

told me: "I don't remember any of us talking about being scared, we just got on with it." All sorts of great deeds were done in the Normandy Campaign but how many D-Day teenagers went ashore without even a gun and ended the day with an award for gallantry? I would not mind betting that Bill Bennett's D-Day was unique. I wish Bill and Sylvia every happiness.

MASTER Sergeant Robin Brown thought she'd enliven the US National Guard oath of allegiance by using a dinosaur hand-puppet to recite the words, Sooty-and-Sweep style. Unsurprisingly, she and two colleagues who took part in the gag have been sacked. What is surprising is that Brown served in the public-affairs office. Despite all the media training, she forgot the first rule of public relations. Wherever you are and whatever you're about to do, just pause, remind yourself that you live in a world where there are no longer any secrets and ask the question: how's this gonna look in the papers?

A LANCASHIRE farmer, Stephen Nolan, has won much support for erecting a sign pointing out that, among other things, farm animals "make funny sounds, smell bad and have sex outdoors." Unless you can tolerate all this, he says, then don't buy a property next to a farm. Which all sounds perfectly reasonable. Except that in my experience when people suddenly start complaining about farm smells it isn't always because they're newly-arrived snowflake townies who can't abide old-fashioned muck. Sometimes they are long-term country dwellers living close to a farmer who's just drenched his fields in pig or poultry slurry, or some other vile-smelling by-product of industrialised agriculture, and is playing the "townie" card rather than doing the decent thing and apologising.

TALKING POINT



We should be spitting mad over vile habit

REGULAR readers will have noticed that this column never shies away from any subject, serious or trivial, but there is one topic that is long overdue – spitting in public.

For whatever reason, there seems to be a creeping acceptability of this revolting habit, whether it be in the street, or open spaces such as parks, and railway station platforms.

Years ago, although smoking was allowed on the upper deck of buses, there was invariably a Spitting Prohibited sign to remind passengers that this was most definitely banned.

Birmingham rock 'n' roller Steve Gibbons even wrote a song, 'No Spitting On The Bus', in which he says boredom and disillusionment can never be used as an excuse.

That was in the 1970s but today there is another factor to consider – aggression. Health service workers are often targeted by spitting yobs for no other reason, it seems, than to get the upper hand.

On the football pitch, spitting is deemed to be one of the most serious misdemeanours when aimed at an opponent, yet many a TV camera has captured instances of phlegm being deposited on the turf, very often in glorious close-up.

Earlier this year while at the wheel of his car ex-footballer Jamie Carragher called on all his spitting 'skills' when goaded by another driver and spat in the direction of a 14-year-old girl. Thanks to the dubious merits of social media, this was viewed hundreds of thousands of times, and yes, if you have not had the misfortune to see the incident, it is as disgusting as you might imagine.

Alongside spitting, there's another custom which seems to be becoming the norm, much more rapidly than spitting, and that is regularly sniffing when a good blow of the nose would cure the problem. What is so very difficult about buying a cheap box of handkerchiefs or pocket tissues and clearing the tubes once and for all?

And then there's coughing into one's 'rolled up' hand, which experts will tell you acts as a blowpipe capable of sending germs flying even further, or worse still not using your hand at all. Much better to cough into your upright palm, which acts as a barrier to flying bacteria.

It's all a matter of education. Over a relatively short time, we have come to accept that dog mess must be picked up, and smoking is no longer permitted in public places, so how about an intense public information campaign?

Perhaps that man Mr Gibbons could write a follow-up titled 'No Spitting . . . Anywhere'. You tell 'em, Steve.

STEVE PARLETT

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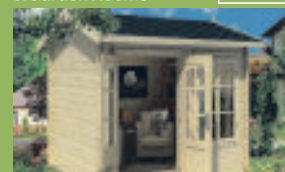
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Venue needs to find a change of use

The Dudley Hippodrome has been the subject of much controversy ever since it closed. Why was it closed?

Because times change and no amount of wishful thinking from a group of well-wishers will change that. I do wish things were different.

Modern entertainment is loud and banal. There are no great comedians these days, foul-mouthed, unshaven trainer-clad per-

sons being the norm, with not a funny bone between them. Musicals seem to be of the Lloyd Webber type and music hall is dead.

Perhaps the Jehovah's Witnesses might take the hall over as an overflow to its magnificent building opposite?

At least the Hippodrome would survive, and that surely is the object of the support group? However, they should hasten along and do something before the building becomes past it.

MR C K MILLWARD
Tipton

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Dudley Chronicle,
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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

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Parliament should not be bypassed

ALL civilised countries have seen the dreadful outcome of a chemical attack launched on the innocent people of Syria.

This is not the first time this criminal regime has done this to its own people. These acts of inhumanity can be compared to the worst acts of atrocity in human history.

It is important that our government has the cour-

age to pronounce that those involved will be held accountable for their unforgivable actions. What we do in response to this murderous act needs the support of the country. Mrs May should not have acted without the support of Parliament, this issue is so important the House needs to approve any actions taken.

JOHN GREEN
Sedgley

So is pocket money cash suspect now?

I WONDER how many more of your readers have been as amazed as I was today?

With two grandchildren living some distance away I hold their building society bank books in order to pay a small amount of pocket money in from time to time.

Their parents are then able to sort out what they wish to buy with this money or to save it for them.

The building society cashier informed me that I cannot pay cash into their accounts at a branch, only the parents can do this and money laundering was mentioned. Well, I for one wouldn't know this practice, nor do I want to know.

Whoever thought up this crackpot idea gets my jobsworth vote.

MRS L SHELTON
Dudley

We must be realistic on Hippodrome

I, like Marlene Watson (Chronicle, April 19), would like to see Dudley Hippodrome re-opened, but one has to be realistic. After a couple of pop concerts and maybe a local amateur show, what would fill the theatre for the rest of the year? Television closed the theatre and now home bingo has done the same.

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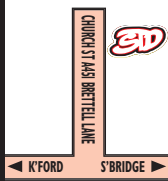


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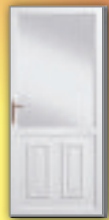
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RBS axes 792 jobs as 162 branches close

A FRESH wave of closures will almost wipe out the Royal Bank of Scotland across the Black Country and Staffordshire.

Branches in Edgbaston, Walsall, Stafford, Sutton Coldfield, Kidderminster, Telford and Shrewsbury are among 162 in England and Wales that will start shutting in August, with the loss of nearly 800 jobs. This will leave just Wolverhampton and Birmingham city centre with RBS branches.

The move will close more than half of the RBS branches south of the Scottish border, leaving just 105. The news was broken to staff on Tuesday.

The lender, still 72 per cent owned by the taxpayer, said the move was linked to it not having to sell its Williams & Glyn business. As a result, the group has branches close to each other – including its NatWest banks – and is seeking to reduce overlap.

Redundant

Natwest has many more sites in England and Wales – 650, including branches at Dudley, Merry Hill, Kingswinford, Walsall and West Bromwich.

RBS said: "Following a review of the branch network in England and Wales a decision has been taken to close 162 Royal Bank of Scotland branches. As a result of this process, around 792 roles will be made redundant, and we will seek to support our colleagues with the option to leave on a voluntary basis."

It comes less than six months since the last round of RBS closures was announced, shutting 259 of its 1,003 branches – 62 Royal Bank of Scotland and 197 NatWest.

RBS had been told to sell off its Williams & Glyn business to meet state aid rules following its £45 billion Government bailout at the height of the financial crisis. But RBS could never find a buyer and is now folding it back into its core business.

£65m NHS and private hospital extension at QE

The tug of history at museum gathering



Canal boats at the Black Country Living Museum, which will host the Tug Boats Gathering this weekend

ONE of the largest tug boat gatherings in the country is set to take place in Dudley over the Bank Holiday weekend.

The Black Country Living Museum will be celebrating the legacy of the canal network with a weekend of hands-on crafts, activities and fascinating talks.

From the 1920s onwards, tug boats with their diesel engines were used to navigate the hundreds of miles of

canals in the Black Country, pulling large amounts of cargo.

Visitors to the museum will be invited to step back in time and see the rare boats put through their paces. Each tug boat is capable of pulling up to 200 tons.

Tim Shields, curator of industry and transport at the Tipton Road attraction, said: "Canals and boats are now associated with pleasure and leisure, but they once played a vital role in

making the Black Country – and indeed the Midlands – what it is today. We want to offer visitors the chance to step back in time and experience this long lost way of life, the culture and art that came with it."

Events will run from Saturday to Bank Holiday Monday, between 10am and 5pm. May 7 also marks the museum's annual May Day celebrations with traditional may pole dancing. Visit www.bclm.com for details.

PLANS for a £65 million expansion at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham have been given the go-ahead.

The scheme at the QE in Edgbaston will see the postgraduate centre opposite the women's hospital knocked down and replaced by a new partly privately run seven-storey building.

Bosses said the new base 'will deliver high quality acute healthcare for private patients in the region, as well as providing additional capacity and specialist facilities for NHS patients'.

The scheme is a joint venture between the University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Trust Foundation Trust and HCA Healthcare UK.

It will provide 138 beds including 72 for the NHS and 56 for private patients, while it will employ 150 people including 97 nurses.

A spokesman said: "The 14,728 sq m hospital will be equipped with the latest technology to provide some of the most complex surgical and medical procedures in cancer, cardiology, neurology, hepatobiliary, urology, orthopaedics and stem cell transplantation."

Radiotherapy

"The facility will include 66 beds dedicated to private patient care, which will be owned and run by HCA UK, in addition to 72 NHS beds, a new radiotherapy unit and state-of-the-art operating theatres."

The scheme, which has been designed by design firm HOK, will be built by VINCI Construction UK. Construction is expected to be finished by 2020.

Dr Dave Rosser, executive medical director at University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust said: "The new facility will add much needed acute capacity for NHS patients in the region with additional world-class facilities and expertise."

Claire Smith, chief executive officer at HCA UK Joint Ventures, added: "We are delighted that building plans for the new hospital facility on campus at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham have now been approved."

Concert to mark church anniversary

A POPULAR ensemble of professional musicians are set to entertain music lover as a Stourbridge church celebrates 175 years this weekend.

The Little Big Time Band will perform at Holy Trinity Amblecote, in Vicarage Road, on Saturday from 7.30pm. The band are a group of musicians from the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, who perform popular classics, jazz and pop.

The concert is being held in celebration of the 175th anniversary of Holy Trinity Church's consecration.

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It's 17th century ladies' night

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April de Angelis' 1993 play Playhouse Creatures brings to life the first women to take to stage in this era, bringing to life historic characters Mrs Betterton, Elizabeth Farley and the brash young sometime orange seller Nell Gwyn.

This witty and poignant tale of back stage friendships and rivalries runs from Monday 5 until Saturday, May 12. Tickets are priced £10, concessions £9, special £8 nights on on Monday and Tuesday. The box office can be contacted on 0121 552 2761 or book online at www.oldburyrep.org website.

Noel's flying high at Arena Birmingham



Noel Gallagher at Arena Birmingham on Tuesday

NOW that's the way to do an arena show – Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds soared at the Arena Birmingham with a near two-hour set that left the fans happy, even those mainly there for the Oasis songs.

The 50-year-old is known for his sarky Mancunian wit and his first utterance was to ask the Brummies how their 's****y football team' was getting on. I guess Villa and Blues fans each thought he meant the other. But you do get bragging rights when your team win the Premiership and the Manchester City flag was draped over part of the stage.

And the former Oasis man was in champion form, his powerhouse ten-piece band launching the gig with wall-of-sound rockers Fort Knox and Holy Mountain from his third and latest High Flying Birds album Who Built The Moon?

His banter is barbed but his band were on top form and the show enhanced by spectacular lights and psychedelic big screen effects.

The 22-song set also included Oasis favourites Little By Little, The Importance of Being Idle, Half The World Away, Wonderwall and, saved for the encore, Go Let It Out and Don't Look Back In Anger.

Leon Burakowski

Building skills for women in Dudley

WOMEN interested in working in construction are invited to attend a series of free information sessions taking place in Dudley next month.

Dudley Council's adult learning service is working with the national organisation Women into Construction to run the workshops. Sessions are at Castle and Priory Neighbourhood Learning Centre from 10am to 11am and Dudley Wood Neighbourhood Learning Centre at 1pm to 3pm on May 24 and Brierley Hill Neighbourhood Learning Centre from 10am to 11am on May 25. The workshops offer construction related training and access to work placements. Call (01384) 818143, go to www.dudley.gov.uk/adultlearn or www.women-into-construction.org

Police seek online fraudster after elderly woman conned

OFFICERS are on the hunt for an online fraudster after an elderly woman was conned into handing over money via a popular mobile phone game.

The trickster befriended an 85-year-old woman on the gaming site Words with Friends in October and began to extort money from her using several different ruses.

After handing over her address and telephone number to her new online acquaintance, the crook began sending a

'friend' to the pensioner's address to collect increasing amounts of money from her.

Police received a tip-off about what was happening and went round to see the woman on April 9.

Jewellery

It was then revealed that she had been taken into Birmingham city centre on Tuesday, April 3 and made to buy £16,500 worth of jewellery under false pretences.

Officers conducted trawls of CCTV coverage at the store on Victoria Street and

want to find a man seen with the victim inside the shop, pictured right.

Multi-player game Words with Friends is most commonly played via an app usually accessed by a phone or tablet device.

Players take turns building words crossword puzzle style. Players can also chat to the person they are playing, who could be anyone around the world who has an internet connection.

Anyone who has any information is urged to contact the police on the non-emergency number 101, quoting 20WS/78872X/18.



The suspect

Machete thugs in raid on shop

AN ARMED gang threatened a store worker with a machete before beating him up and stealing cigarettes.

Four thugs targeted the Highway Food and Drinks Store in Daisy Street, Coseley.

One of the offenders, carrying the weapon, demanded money from a member of staff.

The gang then beat up the terrified worker, punching him several times in the head.

West Midlands Police said the raiders then stole a haul of cigarettes and took off on foot from the shop.

Detectives have launched an investigation into the incident, which took place on Sunday, April 22, at around 6.50pm.

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Murder victim Nunes: Family lose payout case

A MURDER victim's family have been refused a police payout despite serious failings in a botched investigation.

Staffordshire Police force's insurers have turned down a claim made on behalf of Kevin Nunes' son with his family saying they have been 'left out in the cold' after two men acquitted of the murder were given £200,000.

The former Stafford Rangers player was found dead in a country lane in Pattingham where he had been gunned down.

Five men were convicted of the 20-year-old's death, but later acquitted after a report into detective wrongdoing and mishandling of a witness was not disclosed to the trial judge.

Unsolved

Damages totalling £200,000 were paid to two of the four men - Antonio Christie, of Great Bridge and Levi Walker, of Edgbaston - who had their convictions of murder overturned.

Now 16 years on Kevin Nunes murder remains unsolved.

And his family said police failings in the case had caused more suffering for his 15-year-old son. But the claim for misfeasance in public office has been dismissed by the force's insurers.

Benjamin Williams, brother of Nunes' partner Leanne, said: "We want closure for his son who has suffered mentally from the acquittals and subsequent coverage of police failings in the case. It is not over, we will continue to push for a result. We believe the force should pay for the impact the failed case has had on his son."

He added: "It is especially dis-



Kevin Nunes - a formal review has been launched



Nunes' former partner Leanne Williams and her brother Benjamin

appointing when settlements were agreed for some of those acquitted."

Nunes' partner Leanne, 34, lives with their son in the Black Country. She said: "I'm massively disappointed, on the basis that it just feels like everyone and anyone has been rewarded or compensated in some form, yet the victim's family have just been left in the cold."

The claim was based on alleged gross misconduct by retired Staffordshire Chief Constable Jane Sawyers, former Northamptonshire Chief Constable Adrian Lee, ex-Gloucestershire Chief Constable Suzette Davenport, and former West Midlands Assistant

Chief Constable Marcus Beale. It said their alleged failings, and subsequent acquittals, had resulted in Nunes' son suffering psychological damage, including complex traumatic grief.

The case can still be pursued through court. In a letter, the force's solicitors Weightmans said: "Whilst we recognise that failings by Staffordshire Police have caused the claimant and members of his family considerable upset and distress, liability is denied."

This month, a formal review into the murder was launched by Merseyside Police. It will determine if the case can be re-investigated.

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14 Taxpayers should get Wembley cash

Halesowen Chronicle Thursday, May 3, 2018

ANY cash earned from the potential sell-off of Wembley Stadium should 'go back to the public purse', says a Black Country MP.

Fulham FC owner Shahid Khan has made a reported £500 million offer to buy the stadium from the Football Association, saying it would be a 'victory for everyone'.

The new-looking Wembley was completed in 2007 at a reported cost of £800 million. John Spellar, Labour MP for Warley, said: "Any public money which went into Wembley stadium should go back to the public purse. Money should be made available for good causes to take account of what the Lottery put in and money that has come from taxpayers should go back to taxpayers."

Impact

"There must also be assurances that this won't impact on English football requirements such as national football league games."

The FA has confirmed it has "received an offer" to buy the stadium, which the London Evening Standard reports to be a £500m bid that will be put before the full FA board.

An outline agreement between Khan - who also owns Florida NFL club Jacksonville Jaguars - and FA chief executive Martin Glenn is said to already be in place.

Man badly injured as hit by car in Oldbury

A MAN aged in his 50s was seriously hurt when he was hit by a car on a busy road in Oldbury on Monday night.

He was taken to the major trauma centre at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham after the crash on Wolverhampton Road shortly before 11pm near the junction with Titford Road.

Pair of 'cuckooing' drug dealers are put behind bars

Big bash as choir celebrates turning 21



Voices in Harmony are ready to celebrate their big birthday next weekend with a multi-choir extravaganza

A CHOIR from Cradley Heath turns 21 this year and will be performing at their very own birthday party to raise money for Mary Stevens Hospice.

Members of Voices in Harmony, which has nearly 70 members, have

organised a night of music at Dudley Town Hall next Saturday, May 12, featuring more than 120 singers.

The multi-choir extravaganza will be hosted by Crackerjack's Don Maclean and will feature The Gentlemen

Songsters, Colla Voce and Viva Musica.

Tickets are available from the Dudley Town Hall Box Office via their website borough.halls.co.uk or call (01384) 812812.

A YOUNG drug trafficker from the Black Country who managed a criminal enterprise from the home of a vulnerable person in Shropshire has been locked up.

Thomas Holloway and his sidekick Roshawn Sinclair used premises in Shrewsbury as a base for splitting and distributing drugs, in a practice known as cuckooing, a court heard.

Holloway, aged 20, of Harper Close, Rowley Regis, was sentenced to five years custody for possessing crack cocaine and heroin with intent to supply and possession of criminal property.

Criminology student Sinclair, 19, of Normans Drive, West Bromwich, was handed two years and four months behind bars for possessing crack cocaine and heroin with intent to supply.

Police received a tip-off by a manager at a charity and searched premises in Frankwell, Shrewsbury, where they caught the pair with the drugs, a number of mobile phones and knives on January 19.

Travelled

Miss Joanne Barker, prosecuting at Shrewsbury Crown Court, said police found cocaine and heroin with a total estimated street value of £2,290.

Miss Barker told Shrewsbury Crown Court: "Drug dealers have travelled from the Wolverhampton and Birmingham areas to the Shrewsbury community to sell drugs."

Mr Brendan Reedy, on behalf of Sinclair, said this was the first and only day he was involved with drugs. Mr Paul Smith, on behalf of Holloway, said his parents were distraught.

Judge Peter Barrie told the defendants: "There are others up the chain who have an even greater responsibility than you do, but there's no way you can have been involved without understanding the scale of what you were getting involved in."

Fan singing new England pop anthem

A SINGER from Stourbridge has released a charity single ahead of this year's World Cup in Russia.

Steve Heathcock has re-released his song 'England Forever' to raise money for homeless charity Shelter and to show his support for the national team in this summer's tournament.

Steve, aged 51, said: "We are all one step away from homelessness. It could be anyone."

Steve, a full-time singer and performer, decided to raise money for Shelter after witnessing homelessness on the streets of his home town.

The song was originally released ahead of the 2010 World Cup, but has been remixed into a dance track with a pop mix on the B-side. Some of the lyrics have been rewritten.

The single was released on April 27 and is available on iTunes, or via www.steveheathcock.co.uk website.

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These legitimate steps must be taken while you are both alive and in reasonably good mental health. It is therefore important for couples to act NOW!

Most of our clients come to us having already made standard Mirror Wills, or they've been meaning to make a Will but simply haven't got around to it. With Property Trust Wills, yourself and your spouse/partner each leave your half share of the home to the children in Trust, but state that they are not to receive it during the lifetime of the surviving spouse/partner.

This half would then NOT be included in any future means test calculations for care fees. The surviving spouse is free to sell their share of the home, raise cash or move house. Your children are powerless to intervene but simply have to wait for their inheritance, as they would have done previously.



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Family seek answers after death of Kyle

THE family of a schoolboy who died when he was dragged under a lorry near a busy traffic island said they still want answers about his death.

Kyle Bastable, aged 11, was crossing the A4123 Wolverhampton Road at just after 10pm on August 31 when he was hit by a lorry near the Birchley Island in August last year.

Kyle, also known as Joe, died at the scene. In the inquest, which followed in January, the driver said he had not seen Kyle but stopped after he heard a thud.

In his verdict Black Country Coroner Zafar Siddique recorded that the former Rowley Hall Primary School pupil died as a result of a road traffic collision.

But his mother Tammy Bastable and grandmother Susan Bastable have called on the police to reopen the investigation into Kyle's death.

The family also held a protest near to the scene of the fatal accident, where they have been calling for a lower speed limit for HGVs.

Mother Tammy said the family couldn't move on without the investigation being reopened and she warned that unless changes were made then her son 'wasn't the first and won't be the last'.

Grandmother Susan said: "We just want people to listen. We want someone to take on our case. We need people's help."

"We want the investigation into Kyle's death reopened. We want justice so we can let Kyle rest."

Tammy added: "We can't move on. We need closure. We have got questions and we want them answered."

The coroner heard that Kyle was 'dragged under the lorry' for 39 metres, but was told that the collision was unavoidable.

Family friend Emma Palmer paid tribute to Kyle saying he was a 'lovely lad'.

She added: "When he died, part of us died. His family and friends won't ever be the same."



Grieving mother Tammy Bastable with a picture of her son Kyle, who died aged 11 in a traffic accident

Vaccinations drive as more than 100 cases of measles confirmed

MORE than 100 cases of measles have been confirmed in the West Midlands prompting a fresh appeal for parents to keep youngsters up to date with vaccinations.

Since the end of October, there has been an ongoing outbreak of the disease, believed to be linked to similar situations in large parts of Europe including Italy and Romania. Public Health England says there is an increased risk of infection for all who are not fully immunised with two doses of MMR.

Uptake rates vary from 87 per cent of five-year-olds in Wolverhampton to 91.7 per cent in Staffordshire. While 88.7 per cent of youngsters in Sandwell have received both MMR vaccine doses compared with 89.5 per cent in Walsall and 92.2 per cent in Dudley.

Katie Spence, Director of PHE West Midlands Health Protection Team, said: "There are now just over 100 lab-confirmed cases in the region with figures still rising. There are also outbreaks in other parts of the country, so increased risk of infection for all who are not fully immunised with two doses of MMR."

"Measles is a highly infectious virus which can spread rapidly among communities, such as schools. While most people who catch measles will recover completely within a couple of weeks, it's important to remember measles can be a very serious illness that can leave permanent disability and occasionally even kill."

No let up as police target gang members

POLICE officers have vowed not to let up in their fight against violent crime after gang members were jailed for more than 70 years.

A total of 10 people linked to gangs operating across Birmingham and the Black Country were handed jail terms totalling more than 70 years in the past two months.

Jamie Wood, from Wasdale Road, Northfield, who featured in grime videos made by South Birmingham gang the Frankley Killers, is the latest to be locked up after he received almost four years behind bars.

The 23-year-old's sentence comes after Organised Crime and Gang Unit detectives recovered film he had recorded on a mobile phone of a man firing a shotgun at the home of a rival gang member. He did not pull the trigger but was still sent to prison after officers showed that he orchestrated the attack.



Yusupha Sarr - fired shotgun

Firefight

Earlier this month teenage gunman Yusupha Sarr was locked up for 15 years after being involved in a gangland firefight on a Smethwick street. The former professional footballer, aged 19 - linked to the Birmingham street gang 23 Drillas - fired a sawn-off shotgun twice as a man armed with a revolver ran towards him, Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

Armed police were nearby after being warned gang members would be attending an 18th birthday party held in the area and moved in to arrest Sarr, from Church Green in Handsworth, in August last year.

In February Jamaal Scarlett and Courtney Farrell were jailed for 16 and nine years, respectively, for possessing firearms and ammunition after detectives uncovered messages linking them with organised crime. Gang members Jamaal Ahmed and Reece Brevitt were also jailed, while a

16-year-old boy was sent to a young offenders institute for three years.

Chief Inspector Nick Dale said: "Many of these successes have been in part been thanks to information provided by members of the public who had suspicions about individuals, drug dealing or possession of weapons. They called us in confidence, we acted on what they told us and together we are helping to make communities safer."

"Many of these men were lured into gangs as teenagers. They are sold it as an attractive, lucrative way of life but many now see their lives wrecked by long prison sentences."

"We work with local authorities, support groups and charities to try and divert young people away from crime and gang affiliation but there are those who refuse to cooperate. They face the very real danger of being killed or seriously hurt by rivals or spending many years behind bars."

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Give your personal finances a spring clean

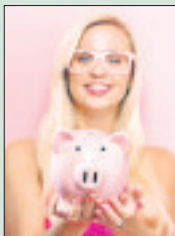
SPRING has sprung and it's time to declutter and sweep aside the cobwebs. But this needn't just apply to those overs-stuffed cupboards and neglected nooks and crannies around your home – you shouldn't let the dust settle on your finances either.

Giving your finances a spring clean can be a great way to ensure you're on top of your budgeting and making the most of any chances to save and spend your money wisely. Here are some suggestions from the experts on how to have a financial spring clear-out...

1. Negotiate a pay rise

Laura Holden, spokeswoman for jobs website Reed.co.uk, says: "It's probably one of the most dreaded conversations you'll face with your boss, but as the saying goes: 'If you don't ask, you don't get'."

She suggests booking time to discuss your performance and using online salary checkers and job ads to ensure you're not asking for too much or too little – and try to approach the conversation with a proactive, positive attitude. Holden suggests highlighting past successes: "They may be obvious to you, but don't assume that your boss will always be aware of your achievements," she adds. "But if you've exhausted your options and feel undervalued, changing jobs is a great way to secure a salary rise."



2. Ditch and switch

Switching credit card, current account, energy or insurance providers can create big savings. Kevin Pratt, consumer affairs expert at monesupermarket.com, says: "If you've got a credit card balance that's costing you interest and you can't clear it, you can transfer it to a card that will not charge interest for up to three years, giving you chance to reduce what you owe."

As for energy providers, he adds: "If you've not switched energy provider for a couple of years or more, or have never switched, you're probably on an expensive variable rate tariff. Switching to a fixed rate deal could save you £250."

3. Pack insurance into holiday planning

Malcolm Tarling, a spokesman for the Association of British Insurers (ABI), says: "Each year, travel insurers help hundreds of thousands of travellers whose holiday did not work out as planned – from having to cancel going, to falling ill abroad and needing emergency medical treatment. So it is vital that you arrange travel insurance well in advance."

4. Give pensions a workout

Sarah Coles, a personal finance analyst at Hargreaves Lansdown, says that as well as making sure

you're saving enough into workplace pensions, people "should also brush up on the scheme itself, and whether there's anything extra on offer from your employer if you agree to pay more into the scheme. The growth of your pension pot comes down to three things: how much you contribute, how long the money is put away for, and how much your investments grow," she adds. "The only part of this that doesn't involve you working harder is investment performance, so

it's worth considering where your pensions are invested."

5. Sort your mortgage

Mark Harris, chief executive of mortgage broker SPF Private Clients, says: "The general movement in mortgage rates is upwards, and anyone on their lender's standard variable rate in particular might want to think about re-mortgaging sooner rather than later. There is no need to panic, but if you would struggle to pay your mortgage were interest rates to rise, then a fixed-rate deal makes sense."

6. Dust off savings accounts

Rachel Springall, a finance expert at Moneyfacts.co.uk, says: "The challenger banks are still offering some of the best rates on the market, so it's wise for savers to consider these more unfamiliar brands." She suggests using apps which help you work out what you can afford to save, and adds: "Opening a regular savings account can also spark the savings habit."

7. Spring clean investments

Ana Cuddeford, investment director at M&G Investments, says: "While you should always take a long-term approach to investing, it's also important not to let the dust settle on your portfolio. An annual spring clean is a good idea to make sure your money is working as hard as possible."



At 31, Ellie Goulding realises the importance of taking care of yourself



Boxing is both a physical and mental workout for Ellie and makes her feel 'empowered'

Ellie: 'I make sure I get 45 minutes of exercise a day'

Pop star ELLIE GOULDING talks to Prudence Wade about endorphins, haircare at the gym, and how boxing helps her feel empowered.

LIKE so many pop stars, Ellie Goulding, from Kington, is in exceptionally good shape.

However, talking to Goulding about fitness, it's clear she doesn't just work out to look good for the cameras (although that is an undeniable bonus).

Instead, it's something she does for herself, and the benefits go far deeper than how she looks. In fact, Goulding might currently be huddled in the studio recording her new album, but the Herefordshire-born 31-year-old still makes time for the gym. Here, she explains why it's such an important part of her life...

Healthy body, healthy mind

"Exercise keeps me sane," says Goulding. "It's good for the soul - it releases endorphins and it's a way of making you feel good about yourself."

A pop career might be synonymous with partying hard, but Goulding recognises the importance of taking care of herself.

"It's scientifically proven that it's not good for you to not exercise, and I take that seriously! Especially when I'm sat in the studio, I make sure I get at least 45 minutes of exercise a day."

Mixing it up

Any PT worth their salt will stress the importance of mixing up your workout routine.

If you stick to the same exercises every week, your body will plateau and it will be more difficult to get results, whereas opting for a bit of variety means you're forcing your body to work harder, and working a greater range.

This is something Goulding is well aware of. When asked what she does if she's hitting up the gym, she excitedly lists a range of exercises she's into at the moment: "I do everything from the stair machine to the elliptical, which takes pressure off my knees. If I need a real burst of cardio, I go on the treadmill, which you can put in dynamic mode so you can just push it with your feet, then I just do a variety of weights."

"I've picked up the most effective exercises over the years."

"There's this one exercise that you can do which is full body - hold two weights in your hands (don't go too light or too heavy), put them on your shoulders, squat down, lift them above your shoulders and then do a bicep curl. Keep repeating this and it's one of the most effective full-body exercises you can do."



Ellie Goulding uses lots of energy on stage but makes sure she exercises regularly even when she is working in the studio

Feeling powerful

If you've had a glance at Goulding's Instagram, or seen her in those Pantene ads on TV, you'll already know she's fond of boxing - and she's frank about why she first got into it: "I wanted to have the potential to punch a guy in the face if they were threatening me."

"I think that so much inequality is based on the science of a man being physically stronger than a woman, and having the potential to overpower them if they want to. I'd like to quash that in the near future, with women being as strong as men."

"Not that a woman should ever have to be in a situation where they're threatened by a man, but unfortunately it happens probably once a minute in this country,"

Goulding continues.

Of course, she appreciates that boxing is an amazing cardio workout too, but it's about the mental benefits too: "Boxing makes me feel extremely empowered."

Beauty boost

Exercising regularly can wreak havoc on your hair and skin, what with the tight ponytails and sweat clogging up your pores - but Goulding is convinced it can be a chance to boost your beauty regime too.

"If I wake up in the morning and I go straight to the gym without showering, I put some oil in the ends of my hair,"

Goulding says. "While I'm training, it doesn't really matter what my hair looks like, so I use that as an opportunity to let oil soak into my hair - especially as I'm blonde,

I need quite a lot of hydration."

In terms of skincare, she keeps it pretty simple. "I think if you're taking care of your skin in general, then when you're sweating, you're getting the toxins out - so the gym is actually very good for your skin," she says, adding that she does quite like to swipe a few cool eucalyptus towels out of the fridge at her gym, to de-sweat with while she's working out.

Ellie Goulding is a Pantene ambassador. Pantene 3 Minute Miracle Repair & Protect Conditioner has the power of a deep treatment in the form of a daily conditioner, repairing the look of up to three months of damage in just three minutes. To find out more, see pantene.co.uk

Cars targeted by thieves in flood

YOUTHS were spotted by firefighters trying to break into vehicles stranded in the severe flooding in Wednesbury last week.

It took place as crews worked to ensure people were safe as water levels rose due the dramatic water main burst in Leabrook Road. They were also reports of children throwing stones into the floodwater, close to where firefighters were working.

Around 60 firefighters, including specialist water rescue teams, rushed to the scene at around 10am on Thursday. Around 10 million litres of water – the same as four Olympic-sized swimming pools – turned streets into a lake up to 9ft deep after Western Power Distribution workers damaged the mains.

Business bosses are concerned at proposal for travellers site

BOSSSES have spoken out against plans to build a £280,000 travellers transit site near their firms.

Dudley Council proposals would see the official travellers site created on Budden Road in Coseley, to help lower the number of illegal encampments. But the director of a neighbouring steel fabricating firm has said he was 'appalled'.

David Springthorpe, managing director of Angle Ring, said: "I am absolutely appalled that

as an immediate neighbour to the site we were not notified directly by Dudley Council about the planning application. I am certain that if as a company we applied for planning permission, and more than 50 local residents objected, then our planning application would be rejected."

Criteria

Chris Hickman, director of South Staffordshire Industries, said: "The site does not satisfy Dudley Council's own selection criteria for a temporary travellers site. Their guidelines

clearly state 'sites on the edge of industrial or residential areas are preferred to sites in the middle of such areas' and the proposed site in Budden Road is surrounded by residential and commercial properties.

"During the mid-1990s we suffered increased crime and other issues when the site was used illegally by travellers and we certainly don't want a repeat of those events."

Dudley Council's Alan Lunt, a strategic director, said the council had been 'open and transparent' about plans to establish a transit site.

Lakes look at driverless pods

SELF-DRIVING vehicles made in Dudley are being considered as a sustainable transport alternative for the Lake District.

A driverless 'pod' made by Kingswinford's Westfield Technology Group has been taken to Brockhole, between Ambleside and Windermere, as part of an exercise to gain public feedback.

The Lake District National Park is the first national park and UNESCO World Heritage Site to take part in such a feasibility study with Westfield. The park is exploring new technologies which allow people to access the national park in an environmentally sustainable way.

Dan the banjo man has folk club gig



Banjo man Dan Walsh is coming to Kingswinford

ACCLAIMED banjo man Dan Walsh is coming to a Kingswinford folk club as part of a mammoth tour promoting the release of his *Verging On The Perpendicular* album.

BBC Folk Awards nominee Walsh's UK tour will see the launch of the all new Dan Walsh Trio – featuring award-winning fiddler Ciaran Algar and long-time collaborator Nic Zuppari on mandolin.

Although favourites the Stafford musician's highly-praised albums will be in the set, the gigs are to be mostly shaped around new material. At the heart of the trio's sound is British, Irish and American folk music delivered with a healthy dose of funky grooves.

Next Friday, May 11, he will be at the Woodman Folk Club, Ashwood Marina, Kingswinford. The show is at 8.30pm and tickets cost £8/£9. Call (01384) 560462 or go to www.woodmanfolk.co.uk for tickets and details.

"It'll be a very lively show with lots of blistering tunes but also some more reflective moments and some new songs we're really pleased with," says Dan.

"I've been travelling all over this year and I spent the first two and a half months of the year on tour in Australia and New Zealand. It'll be great to be back home."

Concerns raised over plans for new homes

CAMPAIGNERS fear disruption caused by new homes being built on sites in Tipton will impact people's quality of life.

Plans were backed recently by Sandwell Council for dozens of homes on three parcels of land in Princes End. But concerns were raised about the scheme with people claiming there has been a lack of consultation.

Councillors say the new homes are much needed in the area.

In total, 63 homes will be built on council-owned sites bordered by Strathmore Road, Kingsbury Road, Sandgate Road, Ridgeway Road and Henn Street.

One of piece of land was the site of Swancroft House and another was Glebefields House, both facilities for the elderly. These have both been cleared. The third site was grassed open space.

A decision will be made by the full council.

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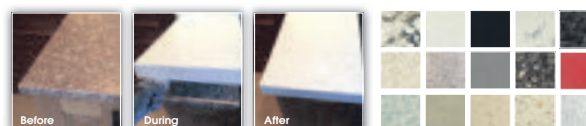
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Discover the wonder of the garden window box



WINDOW boxes can bring a touch of glamour to any window sill and provide everyone with the opportunity of growing flowers, veg and herbs outdoors, without the need for a garden.

When planting up your window box, there are a few things you need to bear in mind. A window-box looks best if it fits as exactly as possible to the size of the window and whatever type or style you use, make sure it is securely anchored.

Ensure your container has drainage holes, and the same goes for any plastic liner you are using (important for wooden window boxes as liners protect against rotting or warping due to prolonged contact with wet soil).

Plants will use up the limited nutrients in compost quite quickly, so mix slow-release fertiliser granules into the compost when planting – this will gradually release nutrients throughout the growing season for a brilliant display.

Make sure that your window boxes are easily accessible from either side.

They will need frequent watering and tending, especially in the summer months, so it's important they are easy to reach.

To stop your window boxes drying out quickly, water them regularly and consider incorporating water-retaining gel into your planting medium.

Boxes that seem to be overflowing with flowers provide a more beautiful and natural look so go for cascading plants to soften edges, and plant flowers close together so that they appear to be bursting with foliage.

Lush

For a suitably lush effect you need plenty of leaf so include at least one good foliage variety in each plant mix.

Annuals and tender perennials such as sun loving petunias, lobelia, fragrant nicotiana and night scented stocks usually grow for a year before being discarded so they don't require much root space.

Half-hardy perennials, such as geraniums, are perfectly at home growing in containers and, if you dead-head regularly, they'll provide continuous blooms for months.

If your kitchen window box is in the sun, then you can grow a variety of edible plants such as dwarf tomatoes, lettuce and peppers, as well as herbs like thyme, chives, parsley, and sage.

Many of us will have some, if not all, windowsills that are in shade for the best part of the day so shade lovers such as ivy, hart's tongue and ferns are a good choice.

The beauty of window boxes is that with a mixture of perennial and annual plants you can have a seasonal makeover to keep everything looking fresh.

Summer planting can include french marigolds, begonias, busy lizzies, and fuschias with trailing sweet peas or lobelia.

For winter selections try combining dwarf skimmia japonica, hellebores, cyclamen and winter heather.

If pots and containers are just part of your outside space then here are some gardening tips for this month from the RHS (Royal Horticultural Society)...

- Plant out seedlings and young plants
- Watering and weeding
- Start spraying roses to stop black spot and mildew
- Fast growing hedges will need a trim
- Plant hanging baskets and containers
- Plant salad leaves seeds
- Tie up climbers
- Feed spring bulbs for next year
- Plant out tomatoes
- Mow the lawn

Sara Milne
The Potted Garden

Green energy is 'helping to set new records'



Wind power is being used more to generate electricity

AN energy expert has welcomed the UK Grid's new record of not generating electricity from coal for more than three days last month.

Ron Fox was commenting after Britain used only power from wind and gas from 10am on April 21 until the afternoon of April 25.

At the same time the country celebrated its first two-day period without using any power from fossil fuels.

"These are very encouraging statistics and show we are going in the right direction towards using renewable sources," said Mr Fox, of Noreus Ltd on University of Keele Science and Innovation Park. "But there is still much work to be done as the first record was helped partly by using gas, another fossil fuel."

He pointed out that coal now supplies less than seven per cent of our electricity and the Government has promised to phase out all coal-fired power stations by 2025. However, gas generates 40 per cent and this fuels most of our domestic heating.

Also he added that the use of all sources of renewable energy, such as wind, solar, biomass and hydropower, beat fossil fuels on only 23 days in all of 2017.

However, he added it was not all bad news as the increasing use of renewable power helped break 13 clean energy records in 2017.

In April last year Britain had its first 24 hours without using any coal power since the Industrial Revolution in the

19th century while in June 2017 wind, nuclear and solar power generated more energy than gas and coal combined for the first time ever.

With the UK halving its carbon emissions from electricity since 2012 it now has the fourth cleanest power system in Europe and the seventh worldwide.

But Mr Fox said the country is still using nearly eight times more gas than coal and it has to buy the former on the more volatile international markets.

Also it was nowhere near the targets of the 2008 Climate Change Act to which the Government signed up to, promising to reduce the 1990 levels of greenhouse gas emissions by 80 per cent by 2050.

The green energy expert called on the Government to give more support for onshore wind and solar power and batteries.

"They provide the cleanest and cheapest energy as well as giving new jobs and fairer bills and helping store power for homes and businesses."

But he also said that householders could cut their carbon footprint now by insulating and draught-proofing their homes.

Around seven million properties in the UK have solid walls with little or no insulation.

Yet spray foaming the loft, inside walls and the outside walls can also cut bills by up to 45 per cent and reduce heating bills.

The perfect place for a calorie-burning workout

Report by Hannah Stephenson

BRITS are burning a whopping 51,428 calories a year in the garden, according to a new study.

Research commissioned by Argos found that the average green-fingered adult spends almost five more hours a week working out, compared to non-gardeners.

Gardening can have a great impact on fitness, wellbeing and even sleep, the study found.

Some 78 per cent of regular gardeners claim it reduces their stress levels and 80 per cent report better nights in the land of nod.

The study also found the average green-fingered Brit can burn 632 more calories (compared with non-gardeners) per month.

Gardening expert David Domoney, who's partnered with Argos to develop a Recommended Daily Allowance for gardening, of 30 minutes a day, said: "Most people enjoy working in their garden, because it gives them a mental boost.

"Digging, tilling [breaking up the top layer of soil] and planting can be extremely therapeutic, and gives people a chance to think while working outside, which is enjoyable in its own right. But we were surprised to see just how much physical exertion it takes to do certain garden tasks, particularly things like pushing a lawnmower or digging.

So, which jobs burn the most calories?

1. Mowing the lawn

Pushing a mower up and down the lawn for 35 minutes can use up 200 calories.

2. Weeding

Pulling up stubborn weeds for 35 minutes can burn 158 calories.

3. Digging

Digging is a great cardio workout and an excellent way to de-stress. You can burn up to 250 calories an hour when digging heavy soil (but don't overdo it if you have a bad back).

4. Raking

Raking is vital to let your lawn and plants breathe – and it'll work your upper body, and burns about 120 calories in 30 minutes.

DIFFERENT JOBS EXERCISE DIFFERENT MUSCLES

Phil McCann, founder of Great Little Garden (greatlittlegarden.co.uk), offers the following tips to avoid injury...

Warm-up

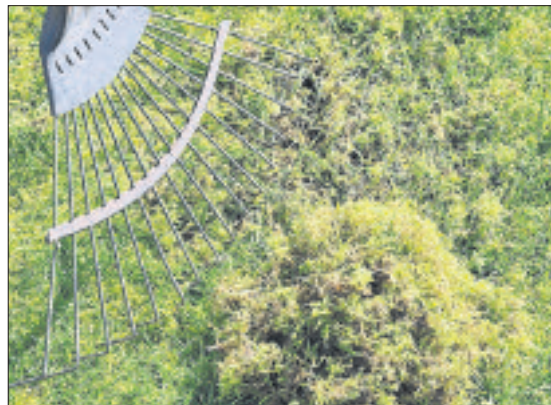
Just like all exercise, warm-up before launching yourself into an intensive calorie-burning session. It's so easy to pull a back muscle on a cold, spring morning by grabbing the spade and plunging in deep. Stretches work best – start gently with whatever exercise you do, working up a sweat as you warm-up.

Start with a plan

In a conventional gym, you will have a workout plan. In the garden, plan to weed



General gardening duties can help burn a surprising amount of calories, according to a new study



Raking is good for the garden – and for you

a bed and turn the compost, or dig over a veg plot and plant up a border. Plans focus the mind.

Use the right tools

Have the correct tools for the job you are

doing. It will ease the strain on backs, arms, wrists and knees. Secateurs are great for cutting smaller branches, but loppers are the thing for thicker ones. Petrol mowers make light work of the lawn but for exer-



Gardening is a less traditional cardio workout opportunity

cise purposes, think about a manual push version.

Don't overdo it

Pain in any joints is your body telling you to have a think about what you are doing!



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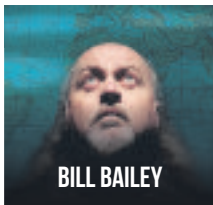
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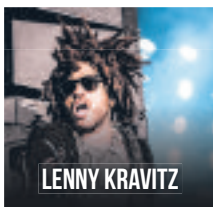
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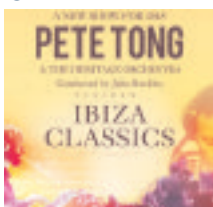
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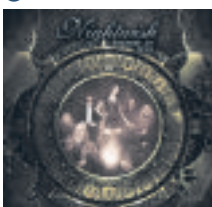
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We're Crazy For an all-dancing musical

You can't beat glorious Gershwin, and the composer has no greater fan than Tom Chambers, who's fulfilling a teenage dream by starring in the musical Crazy For You.

By the time the curtain came down on a production of Crazy For You in the early 1990s, the then-15-year-old Tom Chambers knew his heart lay in performing. "It was the very first live musical I ever saw on stage and it just filled me with so much entertainment and wonder. It was amazing to see what they did with the theatre space and how the story was told. It was the only bit of theatre which truly inspired me."

In a career which has featured a number of crazy twists of fate as well as some fantastic roles, Tom is relishing the chance to recapture that teenage dream and play the lead role in the production, which plays Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Tuesday until May 12.

He plays Bobby, a banker sent to close down a failing theatre who falls for the daughter of the building's proprietor. Determined to win her heart, he adopts the guise of a Hungarian impresario in order to save the theatre and win her heart.

And so, the stage is set for an all-singing, all-dancing story set to a Gershwin soundtrack which includes the likes of They Can't Take That Away From Me, Bidin' My Time and, of course, I've Got Rhythm.

Tom admits he always had a bit of a performing instinct from rattling his feet on the kitchen floor at home from a very young age, and then enjoying watching black-and-white films starring the likes of Gene Kelly. But it was a school play that saw him tread the boards for the first time.

He laughs: "I was playing football during a school break and the English teacher, who was directing the play, said no-one had auditioned for it so there was a compulsory three o'clock audition. I ended up getting the title role in Dracula Spectacular. I loved that relationship recognition between the audience and I. It was fantastic making them respond."

Drama school followed which included a stint understudying Keith Chegwin in the pantomime Cinderella at Basingstoke ("It is one of my claims to fame"), and his first job after leaving was a Spanish TV ad for Kit Kat. Tom says: "I thought this is great. I am going to get non-stop work," but things did not quite work out like that. He had to turn down a role in The Bill because they needed an HGV driver although Tom has now got his Class One lorry-driving licence in common with Chris Eubank.

And when he turned down a role in the tour of Bob The Builder, his agent fired him leaving him in a quandary about what to do next. He enjoyed some success with the movie Fakers which was privately financed and enjoyed a limited cinema release but the work was drying up.

So, he took one final shot at success by aiming to get onto the Royal Variety Performance in the days before Britain's Got Talent and YouTube. He said: "I wrote a letter suggesting I do a Fred Astaire routine on a drum kit and I thought that might appeal, with me tap dancing and kicking drums at the same time. They said get it ready and I spent nine-and-a-half months doing just that. A

Putting on the glitz – Claire Sweeney and Tom Chambers



few weeks beforehand, they then got in touch and said we now have everyone we need. We don't want you, which was a blow.

"So I got in touch with my old school and asked if I could perform it on their stage in the holidays and I got it filmed in black and white. I had 1,000 DVDs made of it sending 400 to America and sent 600 out in this country to theatre owners, directors and TV producers asking if they were doing anything connected to Fred Astaire and, if so, could I have a chat?"

Only two people came back. One was a theatre producer organising a one-night Fred and Ginger tribute, while Tom said the other was an audition for BBC medical drama Holby City. "The producers just thought it was so unusual. They were looking for someone to play an American doctor for two episodes. As Fred Astaire was American, they thought I was too and wanted to get me in. I went to the audition and they said 'where have you been all these years?'"

From there he won the part of Sam Strachan in the hit sister show to Casualty staying in the role for three years as the fiercely-driven doctor who also had a bit of a roving eye.

And it was his role on there that led him into Strictly Come Dancing where he partnered Camilla Dallerup, winning the coveted glitterball. Looking back on his time on the Saturday night TV hit, he admits a lot of it is a blur. Tom explains: "People ask if I can do a quick step or a samba. I have to explain that I had a five-day intense workout on each of those routines. It is such a quick short-term memory injection and that is

Bit like Strictly with everything slotting into place in the right order

it. It was a bit like doing a marathon. You do step-by-step doing a couple of miles at a time and you look back and you don't know how you did it. It is the same with Strictly. Your body naturally gets used to physical exertion and a daily workout but it is the brain that suffers most because of trepidation, fear and anxiety. You are just learning so much. You just go in front of the cameras and the audience and give it your all. I look back now. If I watch anything online of one of our dances, I am looking at it as if I am watching someone else. At the time, you are performing, your brain is just in flight mode."

And now it is Crazy For You which is set to take up the rest of his year. "I think Crazy For You has the absolutely perfect balance of humour, story and singing. There are so many musicals that are heavy on just one element but this show has the perfect combination of everything. It is a bit like the show dance on Strictly with everything slotting into place in the right order." **ANDY RICHARDSON**

● For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.

Singer-songwriter Don McLean



My my it's Mr American Pie at Symphony Hall

PROLIFIC American songwriter Don McLean will visit Birmingham's Symphony Hall next Thursday, May 10, as part of a 14-date UK tour with Nashville star, Jarrod Dickenson.

The show follows the release of McLean's new album 'Botanical Gardens' in March.

With more than 40 gold and platinum records worldwide, Don McLean is one of America's most beloved singer-songwriters. Botanical Gardens, his 19th studio album and first in eight years, is arguably one of his most reflective to date.

Don says: "The inspiration for the project started years ago when I would walk in the beautiful gardens in Sydney, Australia, near the Opera House. I would dream young dreams and it was a comfort and an

inspiration. I was always young inside, like we all are, and I felt it again there."

In nearly 50 years on the scene, Don's songs have become a staple in Americana music. His music has been performed by artists as diverse as Elvis Presley, Madonna, Fred Astaire, Chet Atkins, Weird Al Yankovic, George Michael, Josh Groban, Coolio and Ed Sheeran. His biggest hit 'American Pie' was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame in 2003.

Joining Don on tour by request is Jarrod Dickenson. The Nashville-based, Texas-born musician has already supported acts ranging from Bonnie Raitt to The Stylistics, and he counts himself among McLean's fans, saying: "His contribution to popular music and the craft of song writing can't be overstated."

McIntyre is making merry on world tour



He's become one of the most popular British comics of all time.

Michael McIntyre will return to Birmingham for his latest run of shows - Big World Tour - with dates at the city's Arena from next Thursday, May 10, to May 13.

The star has already sold more than 1.5 million tickets in the UK.

By 2012 he was the highest grossing comedian in the world and, in addition to stand-up, has hosted his own BBC One TV shows, Michael McIntyre's Comedy Roadshow and Michael McIntyre's Big Show, has featured in Live at

the Apollo and, in 2011, was a judge on Britain's Got Talent.

He is looking forward to getting back on stage. "I'm so excited about it. Stand-up comedy is what I do, and it's so rewarding," he says. "If you write a joke and tell it to an audience of 15,000 people who laugh their heads off at it, it's the best feeling in the world."

"This is comedy. We are trying to make people laugh here. So, let's be really silly for two hours. That's where I come in."

"My show is about silliness and exaggerated stories. I like jokes where people don't stop laughing. I want that all the time."

"I don't just like to use punchlines anymore, especially in arenas. They freak me out. There is nothing worse than 15,000 people waiting for a punchline. You're standing there thinking, 'I hope I remember the punchline.' But once you start to think that, you immediately forget it."

"I prefer getting into that sense of rolling laughter. When you get that right, there's no better feeling. I used to be daunted by the prospect of performing in an arena. But having played so many arenas now, I can see that there is something rather magical about them."

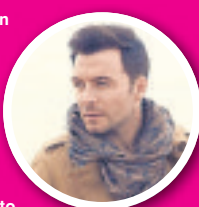
Joe's mischief makes his tour a comedy hit

With sell out nights across the country it's safe to say that Birmingham comic Joe Lycett's latest tour - splendidly named I'm About To Lose Control And I Think Joe Lycett - is a huge success. His laconic skewering of pomposity and humourless officialdom via email battles has certainly struck a chord. The Hall Green comedian can expect a warm home welcome at the New Alexandra Theatre on May 10 and 11, before returning to his home region at a sold out Dudley Town Hall on September 7. He has additional dates on November 12 and 27 at Symphony Hall and Wolverhampton's Aldersley Leisure Village on November 26. There is comedy this week with those Grumpy Old Women - Jenny Eclair, Dillie Keane and Lizzie Roper - on Wednesday, May 9, at the New Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham.

Love Always a success for Shane

Westlife singer Shane Filan is back, fresh from the success of his hugely successful Love Always tour in autumn 2017 and will be in concert at Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre on Saturday. Shane says:

"Birmingham has such an amazing crowd, I just had to perform here again. In fact, the whole tour went so well I thought I would love to take it back out. It was such fun and the fans have taken Love Always to their hearts. I may be adding a few surprises to make this leg a little different."



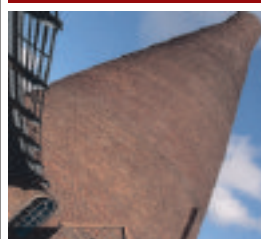
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CHOICE



Alice Roberts

Britain's Most Historic Towns
(Channel 4, 8pm)

Alice Roberts tells the story of the Regency period by studying the history of Cheltenham, Britain's most Regency town. She attends a period society ball, investigates the rigid social hierarchy of the age and explores the Regency fondness for enemas. The penultimate episode of the series in which Alice Roberts studies one key period in history by delving into the secrets of a historic town that encapsulates the era, providing an accurate impression of what life was really like at key moments in the turbulent past.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** The Hairys Bikers' Asian Adventure. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News: Weather. **1.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **2.15** Live Snooker: The World Championship. The opening semi-final is set to come to a conclusion. **4.10** BBC News. **4.20** Regional Programme. **4.30** Final Score. **5.10** Live Women's FA Cup Football. Arsenal Women v Chelsea Ladies (Kick-off 5.30pm). **7.40** **Pointless Celebrities.** Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman present as famous children's TV presenters take part in the general knowledge quiz in which they try to come up with the least likely correct answers to a series of questions posed to members of the public. The contestants are Timmy Mallett, Bernard Cribbins, Andy Crane, Jenny Hanley, Michaela Strachan, Janet Ellis, JB Gill and Cat Sandion. **8.30** **Who Dares Wins.** Nick Knowles presents the game show in which two pairs of complete strangers team up, each battling to outdo the other by listing as much as they know about a given subject. The first couple to win two rounds get to play for £50,000 and each time the champions defeat a new set of opponents their winnings mount up. **9.15** **Casualty.** Connie Beauchamp returns and wastes no time in reasserting her authority, taking over the care of a patient in resus and pitching her idea for a trauma theatre to a sceptical Charlie. Ethan visits the spot where Cal died to pay his respects, and he unexpectedly sees Leigh-Anne – the girlfriend of his brother's murderer. A number of staff members come in to work hungover following a housewarming party at Alicia's new house. **10.05** BBC News: Weather; National Lottery Update. **10.25** **Match of the Day.** Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches. **11.45** **The Button.** Game show set simultaneously in the houses of five UK families, whose members compete to win challenges determined by The Button in the comfort of their living rooms. (R) **12.15** **Film:** When in Rome. (2009) **1.40** Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.45** BBC News.

BBC2

6.15 David Attenborough's Natural Curiosities. (R) **6.40** Naomi's Nightmares of Nature. (R) **7.10** The Pets Factor. **7.30** The Dengineers. **8.00** Absolute Genius: Monster Builds. **8.30** Beyond Bionic. **9.00** Robot Wars. (R) **10.00** Live Snooker: The World Championship. **1.10** Top of the Shop with Tom Kerridge. (R) **2.10** Top of the Shop with Tom Kerridge. (R) **3.10** Love in the Countryside. (R) **4.10** Live Snooker: The World Championship. The opening semi-final is set to come to a conclusion. **6.00** **The World's Most Extraordinary Homes.** Award-winning architect Piers Taylor and actress and property enthusiast Caroline Quentin explore extraordinary homes built in mountain, forest, coastal and underground locations around the world, meeting the owners and architects brave enough to take the challenges on. (R) **7.00** **Dad's Army.** A land mine cuts off all power and communications services in Walmington-on-Sea, but Captain Mainwaring rises to the challenge by declaring martial law – while Pike gets stuck on some iron railings. Vintage comedy first broadcast in 1974, starring Arthur Lowe and Ian Lavender. (R) **7.30** **Live Snooker: The World Championship.** Hazel Irvine presents coverage of the fourth and final session of the second semi-final at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, where the first player to reach 17 frames will progress to the final. Barry Hawkins has been one of the most consistent performers at the Crucible in recent years, reaching the final in 2013 and the semi-finals on three other occasions, although The Hawk lost at this stage in 2017 to four-time champion John Higgins. **10.00** **Film: Kajaki.** (2014) A group of paratroopers are pushed to their limits while trying to find a safe route out of a minefield in Afghanistan. Fact-based thriller, starring David Elliot. **11.40** **Michael Palin: A Life on Screen.** The actor and writer looks back on his career. Featuring classic clips from the archives and contributions from collaborators John Cleese, David Jason and Armando Iannucci. (R) **12.40** **Film:** Easy Money II. (2012) **2.15** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.20** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Super 4. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.00** Star Wars Freemaker Adventures. (R) **7.25** The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.30** Teen Titans Go! (R) **7.45** Adventure Time. (R) **8.00** Thunderbirds Are Go. **8.25** ITV News. **8.30** Zoe Ball on Saturday. **9.25** James Martin's Saturday Morning. **11.20** Invitation to a Royal Wedding. (R) **12.20** ITV News: Weather. **12.30** This Time Next Year. (R) **1.30** ITV Racing: Live from Newmarket. Including the 3.35 Pipco 2,000 Guineas Stakes. **4.00** Tipping Point. (R) **5.00** The Chase. (R) **6.00** ITV News: Weather. **6.15** **Regional Programme:** Weather. **6.30** **Ninja Warrior UK.** Gethin Jones, Jenni Falconer and Josh Cuthbert test their strength, speed and courage in this obstacle-course challenge, hosted by Ben Shephard. Rochelle Humes and Chris Kamara. **7.30** **Harry Hill's Alien Fun Capsule.** Jordan Stephens, Janet Street-Porter, Alex Brooker and Una Stubbs are tasked with saving planet Earth from any potential alien invasion in the comedy panel show. **8.00** **Britain's Got Talent.** Ant and Dec host the fourth addition round of the nationwide talent search, which sees a wide variety of acts, from comedians to contortionists, singers to spoon players, compete to impress judges Simon Cowell, Alesha Dixon, Amanda Holden and David Walliams. Whomever the quartet choose to send through to the live stages will then be in with a chance of winning a huge cash prize and a coveted slot at the Royal Variety Performance later this year, following in the footsteps of 2017 winner Tokio Myers. **9.15** **Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?** New series. Jeremy Clarkson hosts the first in a special week-long revival of the quiz celebrating its 20th anniversary, with contestants answering questions to win up to £1million. **10.20** ITV News: Weather. **10.35** **Film: Sex and the City 2.** (2010) Comedy sequel, with Sarah Jessica Parker and Kristin Davis. **1.15** Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.15 Motor Sport: British GT. **7.10** The King of Queens. (R) **7.35** The King of Queens. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Frasier. (R) **10.00** Frasier. (R) **10.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.55** The Simpsons. (R) **12.25** The Simpsons. (R) **12.55** The Simpsons. (R) **1.25** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.25** A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun. (R) **3.25** A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun. (R) **4.30** Collection Hunters. **5.35** The Secret Life of the Zoo. (R) **6.30** **Channel 4 News.** **7.00** **The Restoration Man: Best Builds.** George Clarke looks back at four of the most dramatic tower conversions from the show. A pair of railway enthusiasts took on a derelict water tower on the Settle to Carlisle line, while a couple battled illness to turn a Georgian windmill into a family home. There's also another chance to see how a 17th-century fortified structure in Scotland and a Grade II-listed water tower near Congleton in Cheshire were transformed. (R) **8.00** **Britain's Most Historic Towns.** Alice Roberts tells the story of the Regency period by studying the history of Cheltenham, Britain's most Regency town, investigating the rigid social hierarchy of the age. **9.00** **Film: Zoolander 2.** (2016) Premiere. Dim-witted supermodels Derek Zoolander and Hansel McDonald must step back into the spotlight and save the day when a maniacal villain starts murdering some of the world's most beautiful pop stars. Comedy sequel, starring Ben Stiller and Owen Wilson, with Penelope Cruz, Will Ferrell and Kristen Wiig. **11.00** **Film: Ride Along.** (2014) A wannabe police officer persuades his girlfriend's tough detective brother to take him along on duty. The cop hopes to scare his unwanted partner away from his sister by exposing him to danger - but needs some help when the patrol leads to a run-in with the city's most wanted criminal. Comedy, starring Ice Cube, Kevin Hart and Laurence Fishburne. **12.50** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **1.40** Hollyoaks. (R) **3.50** Come Dine Champion of Champions. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.05** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.40** The Gadget Show. (R) **11.30** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.25** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.25** Police Interceptors. (R) **2.25** The Nightmare Neighbour Next Door. (R) **3.20** The Nightmare Neighbour Next Door. (R) **4.20** Nightmare Tenants, Slum Landlords. (R) **5.20** Bad Tenants, Slum Landlords. (R) **6.15** **5 News Weekend.** **6.20** **Rich House, Poor House.** Colin and Lizzy Whiting, who find themselves in the wealthiest 10 percent of Britain, swap their five-bedroom house near Newquay to spend a week living in a two-bed property where the Timmins family live. The Timmins on the other hand, are among the poorest 10 percent in the country, and survive on a tenth of the weekly budget the Whittings have. (R) **7.20** **Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away!** In east London, High Court Enforcement Agents Paul and Phil are involved in a brothel eviction, while in south Wales, Stewart and Elmore chase a debt owed by a working mum. (R) **8.15** **Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away!** Paul Bohill and Phil Short must deal with a negligent tenant who fled upon their arrival, forcing the agents to set a trap in order to evict him. Brian O'Shaughnessy and Kevin Stokes chase a debt of £5,000 in Kent, before heading to Surrey to recover £11,000 owed by the owner a bespoke furniture business. Plus, Paul and Steve Pinner's patience is tested to the limit when they are sent to carry out an eviction in London. (R) **9.15** **Secrets of Tutankhamun's Treasures.** The origins of the Egyptian pharaoh's iconic death mask, examining theories that many of the items he was buried with were hurriedly assembled after his unexpected death. **10.10** **The Great Ramesses: New Evidence Revealed.** New series. Series exploring famous people and places of ancient Egypt, beginning with Ramesses II, who led his people to victory against the Hittites and was declared a living god. **11.10** **Football on 5: Last Day of the Season.** Colin Murray introduces highlights. **12.10** SuperCasino. **4.00** Billionaire Babies: 24 Carat Kids. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four **7.00** Nature's Epic Journeys **8.00** Wild Burma: Nature's Lost Kingdom **9.00** Salamander: Blood Diamonds **10.35** Land of the Lost Wolves **11.35** Top of the Pops: 1985 **12.05** An Evening with Glen Campbell **1.25** Nature's Epic Journeys **2.25** Wild Burma: Nature's Lost Kingdom **3.25** Close **ITV2** **11.35** Britain's Got More Talent **12.35** Ninja Warrior UK **1.40** **Film:** Babe (1995) **2.40** FYI Daily **2.45** **Film:** Babe (1995) **3.30** **Film:** Twister (1996) **4.30** FYI Daily **4.35** **Film:** Twister (1996) **5.40** **Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002) **6.40** FYI Daily **6.45** **Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (2002) **9.15** Britain's Got More Talent **10.15** Celebrity Juice **11.05** Family Guy **12.30** American Dad! **1.30** Plebs **1.55** CelebAbility **2.40** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.50** Teleshopping **5.50** ITV2 Nightscreen **ITV3** **11.00** Agatha Christie's Marple **1.00** **Film:** Columbo: Make Me a Perfect Murder (1978) **3.00** **Film:** Casablanca (1942) **5.00** Midsummer Murders **11.05** Vera **1.05** Stephen Fry's Key to the City **2.00** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping **ITV4** **11.20** Cycling **11.55** Cycling: Tour de Yorkshire **1.00** Cycling: Tour de Yorkshire Live. Coverage of the third stage of the men's race from Richmond to Scarborough. **6.00** Pawn Stars **7.00** The Motorbike Show **8.00** Cycling: Tour de Yorkshire **9.00** **Film:** Heartbreak Ridge (1986) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05** **Film:** Heartbreak Ridge (1986) **11.45** **Film:** The Fugitive (1993) **12.45** FYI Daily **12.50** **Film:** The Fugitive (1993) **2.20** The Protectors **2.45** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping **E4** **12.00** The Goldbergs **2.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.00** Young Sheldon **3.30** **Film:** Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters (2013) **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** **Film:** The Transporter (2002) **10.50** Gogglebox **11.55** The Inbetweeners **1.00** Tattoo Fixers **2.05** Rude Tube **3.05** Gogglebox **4.00** How I Met Your Mother **4.45** Rude(ish) Tube **Film4** **11.00** Magic in the Water (1995) **1.00** Anastasia (1997) **2.55** Arriety (2010) **4.50** Home Alone (1990) **6.55** Taxi (2004) **9.00** Crimson Peak (2015) **11.15** Goat (2016) **1.20** Shutter Island (2010) **4.00** Close

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CHOICE



Liam Charles (right)
Bake Off: The Professionals (Channel 4, 8pm)
New series. Professional duos from across the UK go head to head, aiming to impress judges and celebrated pastry chefs Cherish Finden and Benoit Blin, and progress to the next round. In the first episode, the teams must finely craft two batches of uniform miniature classics - 24 conversations and 24 tartes aux fruits - in just three and a half hours. This is followed by the Showpiece, in which a reinvention of the Black Forest gâteau is required in five hours. Presented by former Bake Off contestant Liam Charles and comedian Tom Allen.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.35** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News: Weather. **1.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **2.15** Money for Nothing. (R) **2.45** Britain's Fat Fight with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall. (R) **3.45** Points of View. **4.00** Songs of Praise. **4.35** Britain's Best Home Cook. **5.35** BBC News. **5.50** Regional Programme. **6.00** **The Big Painting Challenge.** Mariella Frostrup and Rev Richard Coles present the final from Chatham's historic dockyards, where the artists must paint a self-portrait for their first challenge. The finalists then receive individual masterclasses in the areas coaches Diana Ali and Pascal Anson feel they need help, which involves everything from painting with roller to working blindfolded. In the final round, the contestants have a free hand to paint whatever they choose to impress judges Daphne Todd and Lachlan Goudie, before one of them is named this year's winner. Last in the series. **7.00** **Countryfile.** Anita Rani is put through her paces with a Mountain Rescue team in Rothbury, Northumberland, hearing how new technology is helping search-and-rescue operations in the local area. **8.00** **Antiques Roadshow.** Fiona Bruce presents the show from Helmingham Hall in Suffolk, where experts examine a medieval sword found in a pond, an Indian jewel and a collection of decorative boxes. **9.00** **The Woman in White.** Marian overhauls Percival and Fosco conspiring to seize Laura's inheritance after her death. **10.00** BBC News. **10.20** Regional Programme. **10.30** **Match of the Day 2.** Mark Chapman reviews the day's Premier League action, featuring highlights of Manchester City v Huddersfield Town, Arsenal v Burnley and Chelsea v Liverpool. **11.35** **Reggie Yates: Life and Death in Chicago.** The broadcaster travels to Chicago to investigate gun crime in President Obama's adopted hometown to find out why so many of the victims are young African-American men. (R) **12.35** Weather for the Week Ahead. **12.40** BBC News.

BBC2

6.05 Coast. (R) **6.35** Glorious Gardens from Above. (R) **7.20** Life in a Cottage Garden with Carol Klein. (R) **7.50** Countryfile. (R) **8.45** The Beechgrove Garden. **9.15** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **10.45** Spring Kitchen with Tom Kerridge. (R) **11.30** Lorraine Pascale: How to Be a Better Cook. (R) **12.00** MOTD2 Extra. **12.30** Badminton Horse Trials. Coverage of the fifth and final day of the event. **2.00** Live Snooker: The World Championship. The opening session of the final at the Crucible Theatre. **5.30** Badminton Horse Trials. Further coverage of the fifth and final day of the event. **6.00** **Athletics: Diamond League Doha Highlights.** Gabby Logan presents action from the opening Diamond League event of the season, held at the Hamad Bin Suhaim Stadium in Doha, Qatar. The women's 100m was scheduled to feature Olympic champion Elaine Thompson of Jamaica, along with Dutch 200m world champion Dafne Schippers. **7.00** **Live Snooker: The World Championship.** Hazel Irvine presents all the action from the second session of the final at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre, where a further nine frames are scheduled to take place. John Higgins looked set to open up an imposing lead over Mark Selby during the second session of last year's final, but the Jester from Leicester took the last three frames of the evening to trail 10-7 heading into the final day. The commentary team features five former world champions in Dennis Taylor, Steve Davis, John Parrott, Ken Doherty and Stephen Hendry, along with Alan McManus and John Virgo. Subsequent programmes subject to change. **11.00** **Famalam.** Comedy sketch show. **11.20** **Live at the Apollo.** Henning Wehn hosts tonight's show, which features performances from Lucy Porter and Guz Khan. (R) **12.05** **Film:** Easy Money III: Life Deluxe. (2013) A criminal searches for his missing sister, while another prepares for the biggest heist of his career. Crime thriller sequel, starring Joel Kinnaman and Matias Varela. **2.05** **Sign Zone:** Question Time. Topical debate from St Albans, Hertfordshire, chaired by David Dimbleby. (R) **3.05** **Holby City.** Fletch clashes with Abigail. (R) **4.05** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITY: Sooty. **6.10** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.20** Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) **6.35** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.45** Super 4. (R) **6.55** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.00** Thunderbirds Are Go. (R) **7.25** The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.30** Teen Titans Go! (R) **7.45** Adventure Time. (R) **8.00** The Haunted Hathaways. (R) **8.25** ITV News. **8.30** Zoe Ball on Sunday. **9.25** Love Your Garden. (R) **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **11.00** Britain's Got Talent. (R) **12.15** Britain's Got More Talent. (R) **1.15** ITV News: Weather. **1.30** ITV Racing: Live from Newmarket. Including the 3.35 Qipco 1000 Guineas Stakes. **4.00** Tipping Point. (R) **5.00** The Chase Celebrity Special. (R) **6.00** **Harry Hill's Alien Fun Capsule.** Jordan Stephens, Janet Street-Porter, Alex Brooker and Una Stubbs are tasked with saving planet Earth from any potential alien invasion in the comedy panel show. (R) **6.30** **ITV News:** Weather. **6.45** **Regional Programme:** Weather. **7.00** **Little Big Shots.** Dawn French hosts a variety show featuring a street dance crew, a nine-year-old who knows everything there is to know about Eurovision, and a world champion hen racer. **8.00** **The Durrells.** The family meets a travelling circus. Larry falls in love with a contortionist, while Margo takes to the ring in person to perform a very dangerous act. Last in the series. **9.00** **Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?** Jeremy Clarkson hosts the second edition in a special revival of the quiz to celebrate its 20th anniversary. Six more contestants compete in Fastest Finger First, to see who will sit in the hot seat and have the chance to take home the £1million jackpot. As always, the players have three lifelines - Ask the Audience, Phone a Friend and 50:50 - at their disposal. **10.05** **ITV News:** Weather. **10.20** **Peston on Sunday.** Political magazine. (R) **11.20** **The Royal Wives of Windsor.** Part one of two. Documentary exploring how the women who have married into the house of Windsor over the last century have transformed one of the most famous dynasties in the world. (R) **12.15** The Royal Wives of Windsor. (R) **1.05** Jackpot247. **3.00** Motorsport UK.

CHANNEL 4

6.10 Mobil 1: The Grid. **6.40** MSA British Rally Championship. **7.05** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.25** Eat the Week. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast. (R) **1.30** The Simpsons. (R) **2.00** The Simpsons. (R) **2.30** **Film:** Megamind. (2010) Animated superhero comedy, with the voice of Will Ferrell. **4.25** Location, Location, Location. (R) **5.30** Channel 4 News. **6.00** **Escape to the Chateau.** Fresh from the success of hosting a three-day wedding at the chateau, Dick and Angel make business plans for the grounds, intending to charge people to fish in the moat and forage in the woods. Angel starts work on a second guest suite, but also wants to install an elevator, which pushes Dick's engineering skills to the limit. (R) **7.00** **The Crystal Maze.** Richard Ayoade guides an AC/DC tribute band from Newcastle through the Aztec, Medieval, Industrial and Future zones, tackling a range of skill, mystery, physical and mental challenges. Last in the series. **8.00** **Bake Off: The Professionals.** New series. Professional duos from across the UK go head to head, aiming to impress celebrated pastry chefs Cherish Finden and Benoit Blin, and progress to the next round. **9.00** **Homeland.** Carrie and Saul's mission does not go as planned. Elizabeth Keane fights for her presidency. Espionage drama, starring Claire Danes, Mandy Patinkin and Elizabeth Marvel. Last in the series. **10.15** **Walter Presents: Tabula Rasa.** Belgian crime drama about a woman with amnesia who becomes a key figure in a missing persons case, and must recover her memories to prove her innocence. Starring Veerle Baetens. **11.15** **Film: Transporter 3.** (2008) Underworld courier Frank Martin transports the kidnapped daughter of a crooked government minister across Europe. Action thriller sequel, with Jason Statham and Natalya Rudakova. **1.10** **Film:** Ruston. (2016) **3.40** Mobil 1: The Grid. (R) **4.05** Gillette World Sport. **4.35** Kirstie's Vintage Gems. (R) **4.50** Gok's Fill Your House for Free. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess. **6.10** Wissper. (R) **6.20** Poppy Cat. (R) **6.30** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **6.35** The Secret Life of Puppies. (R) **6.40** Morfy. (R) **6.45** Peppa Pig. (R) **6.55** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.05** Thomas & Friends. (R) **7.15** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.30** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.35** Rusty Rivets. **7.55** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.10** Nella the Princess Knight. (R) **8.25** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **8.45** Floogals. (R) **8.55** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.05** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.25** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.40** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.50** Peppa Pig. (R) **10.00** Great Birmingham 10K Run. **12.00** Dogs Make You Laugh Out Loud 2. (R) **12.30** **Film:** Ace Ventura: Pet Detective. (1994) Comedy, starring Jim Carrey. **2.05** Pets Make You Laugh Out Loud. **3.05** Cats Make You Laugh Out Loud 2. (R) **4.05** Greatest Ever Celebrity Wind Ups. (R) **5.05** 5 News. **5.10** The Adele Story. (R) **6.30** **Britain's Favourite Abba Songs.** A countdown of the Swedish pop group's 20 most popular songs, as voted for by their fans, with celebrities including singers Jane McDonald, Claire Richards and Liz McAlarnon and former Blue Peter presenters Janet Ellis and Peter Duncan introducing their favourite clips. Featuring rare footage of the band, fascinating facts, and the stories of people who have turned their homes into shrines to the four-piece, a woman who named her daughter Abba, and a lady who learned Swedish just to get closer to her heroes. (R) **8.00** **Eurovision Greatest Hits.** **9.00** **When Eurovision Goes Horribly Wrong.** Angela Rippon presents a guide to the song contest's most disastrous moments. Featuring contributions from past acts including Dana, Sonia, Cheryl Baker and Jay Aston of Bucks Fizz, Lindsay Dracass, Belle & the Devotions, the Brotherhood of Man, Scooch, Nicki French, Andy Abraham, Kate Robbins and Danish singer Birthe Wilke, who recalls the kiss that ruined her chances in 1957. **11.55** **Football on 5: Last Day of the Season.** Colin Murray introduces highlights of the final round of regular-season Championship fixtures, including Sunderland v Wolverhampton Wanderers and Millwall v Aston Villa. **12.50** **Criminals: Caught on Camera.** (R) **1.15** SuperCasino. **3.10** The Yorkshire Vet. (R) **4.00** Tribal Teens. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Only Connect **7.30** Civilisations Stories: Treasures of the Bronze Age **8.00** Dancing in the Blitz: How World War Two Made British Ballet **9.00** Ballet's Dark Knight - Sir Kenneth MacMillan **10.00** Michael Clark's To a Simple, Rock 'n' Roll - Song **10.55** Duet **11.00** Rich Hall's California Stars **12.30** Science and Islam **1.30** Dancing in the Blitz: How World War Two Made British Ballet **2.30** Ballet's Dark Knight - Sir Kenneth MacMillan **3.30** Close **ITV2**
12.00 You've Been Framed! Gold **1.00** Celebrity Catchphrase **2.05** **Film:** Spy Kids (2001) **3.05** FYI Daily **3.10** **Film:** Spy Kids (2001) **3.55** Britain's Got Talent **5.10** Britain's Got More Talent **6.10** **Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) **7.10** FYI Daily **7.15** **Film:** The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003) **10.00** Family Guy **11.30** American Dad! **12.25** **Film:** Saw (2004) **1.25** FYI Daily **1.30** **Film:** Saw (2004) **2.30** Teleshopping **ITV3**
11.50 Agatha Christie's Marple **6.00** Lewis **8.00** Sunday Night at the Palladium **9.00** Midsomer Murders **11.00** Wire in the Blood **1.10** Blue Murder **2.25** Liverpool **1.30** Road to Avonlea **4.55** George and Mildred **5.45** ITV3 Nightscreen **ITV4**
12.00 Cycling: Tour de Yorkshire Live. **5.30** Pawn Stars **6.55** Mr Bean **8.00** Cycling: Tour de Yorkshire **9.00** **Film:** Jaws 3 (1983) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05** **Film:** Jaws 3 (1983) **11.05** **Film:** The Bank Job (2008) **12.05** FYI Daily **12.10** **Film:** The Bank Job (2008) **1.20** BRDC Formula 3 Highlights **2.15** Tommy Cooper **2.45** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping **E4**
11.30 The Goldbergs **1.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **1.30** The Big Bang Theory **4.30** **Film:** Evolution (2001) **5.30** The Big Bang Theory **8.00** Young Sheldon **8.30** The Big Bang Theory **9.00** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **10.00** The Inbetweeners **11.10** **Film:** Magic Mike (2012) **1.25** The Big Bang Theory **2.25** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **3.10** Rude Tube **3.40** Hollyoaks **Film4**
1.00 Capture the Flag (2015) **2.50** The Boxtrolls (2014) **4.40** Young Sherlock Holmes (1985) **6.50** The Devil Wears Prada (2006) **9.00** Pitch Perfect (2012) **11.15** Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992) **1.45** Fright Night (1985) **4.00** Close

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
Notting Hill, ITV, 10.20pm
A recently divorced bookshop owner finds love with a glamorous Hollywood film star, but ends up the focus of unwanted media interest - which makes maintaining a relationship a tricky proposition. Romantic comedy written by Richard Curtis, starring Hugh Grant, Julia Roberts, Rhys Ifans, Emma Chambers, James Dreyfus and Gina McKee. (1999)

TUESDAY
Snatched At Birth, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A grieving woman develops an unhealthy obsession with having a child. When her best friend gives birth, and then dies in a car accident, the newborn goes missing. Thriller, starring Kaitlyn Black, David Gallagher and Alexandra Paul. (2017)

WEDNESDAY
Driven Off the Rails, Channel 5, 3.15pm
Premiere. A married woman loses her memory after an accident, but when her memory returns, she believes she has had an affair with a missing man. Drama, starring Hannah Barefoot. (2017)



Buried, Friday, BBC1, 11.55pm
The Quiet Ones, Channel 4, 2am
An academic scientist recruits a group of Oxford students for a strange experiment, performing a series of tests on a woman in the hope of tapping into her apparent psychic abilities and deliberately manifesting a poltergeist. However, they soon find they are unable to control the dark forces they unleash. Horror, starring Jared Harris and Sam Claflin. (2014)

THURSDAY
Sinister Stepmother, Channel 5, 3.15pm
Premiere. A divorcee is surprised to learn her ex-husband has married a younger woman - and even more surprised to discover her dark past. Thriller, with Annie Wersching. (2017)

FRIDAY
Buried, BBC1, 11.55pm
A man buried alive in the Iraqi desert tries to organise a rescue before he runs out of air - but even he does not know where he is. Thriller, starring Ryan Reynolds. (2010)

Peter and Sian are back in the driving seat once again

Sometimes, the best ideas tend to be the most simple. Take Peter Kay's Car Share, for example. It was inspired by the Alfred Molina and Dawn French sitcom Roger & Val Have Just Got In, which focused on a couple spending time chatting about their day having returned home from work. Co-creator Paul Coleman had previously worked with Kay on Max and Paddy's Road to Nowhere, so he approached him with the idea of two people travelling to and from their workplace by car. Kay brought in his old friend Sian Gibson (they had met as students at Salford University), and the rest is history. Kay plays supermarket assistant manager John, who picks up colleague Kayleigh every day, initially as part of a new work scheme. At the start, they barely know each other, but as the weeks go by and they chat while travelling or stuck in traffic, they gradually become close friends. "The idea of two people car-sharing to work each day really appealed to me, as it highlights the comedy in the minutiae of the daily trek and allows the spiralling conversations of life to unwind in all of their glory," said Kay ahead of the first series. Clearly the great British public agreed, because the sitcom was an instant success when the first series was originally made available via the BBC iPlayer in 2015; it went on to become the platform's most-watched series to be released as a box set. A second run aired last year, with John and Kayleigh growing ever-closer. The run ended as she declared her love for him before storming out of the car when he failed to reciprocate. Kay claimed that was the end of the entire project - but fans were up in arms. How could two such popular characters be left dangling in mid-air? Some folk even began a petition in the hope of persuading him to change his mind, collecting around 100,000 signatures in the process. Thankfully Kay announced he had relented during an appearance with Gibson on Children in Need last November. "We were completely overwhelmed by the response and even though we've no plans to write a third series we knew we couldn't end the story there," claims Kay. Shane Allen, the BBC's controller of comedy commissioning, adds: "This new finale is going to be the TV comedy equivalent of The Space Landing, Who Shot JR? or The Olympics Opening Ceremony depending on how old you are." The final episode, written by Coleman, Gibson and Kay, is yet to come, but preceding it is this completely unscripted tale. "We were always very fond of ad libbing around the script when we were filming the series," reveals Kay. "So we decided to see what would happen if we took the script away and just relied on just our chemistry alone, reacting to whatever came on the radio."



Peter Kay's Car Share Unscripted, Monday, BBC1, 10pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Genderquake Channel 4, 9pm
Eleven strangers with different gender identities and sexualities spend a week together under one roof in the hope that they will discover what divides them and what unites them. In the first of two editions, introductions quickly lead to arguments on the opening night and over the following days, as the housemates begin to make new alliances over visits to a country pub and nearby Brighton beach. Non-binary Saffron confesses her deepest anxieties to straight guy Tom, while transgender woman Brooke finds the confidence to brave the hot tub.

TUESDAY
Back to the Land with Kate Humble BBC2, 7pm
New series. Return of the show in which the presenter champions the UK's most inspirational rural entrepreneurs. The first edition comes from Cornwall and features Tim and Caro, who free dive to pick seaweed. After a tough first few years living in caravans, Kate meets them at their most crucial point of expansion - they are about to move to a new premises, are embarking on cultivating their own seaweed for the first time, and Caro is pregnant with her second child. Plus, a visit to a duck farm run by a couple who used to work in the haulage business.

WEDNESDAY
The Secret Life of the Zoo Channel 4, 8pm
Chester Zoo's penguins move into a temporary home while a new luxury home is built for them, but the move becomes upsetting when malaria sweeps the colony, with elder Rudd battling to survive against the odds. Meanwhile, the African painted dog pups venture out of their den for the first time, but the runt of the litter Mosi refuses to go out into the cold, and keepers worry she may have issues with her eyesight. Elsewhere, Sumatran orangutan Emma gives birth, and a beetle with a wonky horn has to fight other bachelors in the group to win the attention of a female.

Britain's Fat Fight with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall BBC1, 9pm
In the final episode of the series, Hugh turns his attention to junk food marketing techniques, and compares them to the amount that is spent on marketing for vegetables and healthy eating alternatives. Hugh also heads to a Conservative Party Conference, where he has been invited to speak about obesity, but is frustrated in his attempts to get an audience with Jeremy Hunt. Elsewhere, with the help of Jamie Oliver, he comes up with a bold plan to try and improve the health of the nation.

THURSDAY
Britain's Best Home Cook BBC1, 8pm
Claudia Winkleman presents week two of the culinary contest, which sees the cooks create their ultimate fish dish, with accompaniments designed to showcase their individual personality. They must then invent a sweet or savoury meal with squash or rice as the key ingredient, before an anxious wait to hear who has to cook again. This week, judges Mary Berry, Dan Doherty and Chris Bavin have chosen a tricky dessert that requires precision - but

FRIDAY
The One Show: NHS Patients Awards Special BBC1, 7pm
As the NHS marks its 70th anniversary, The One Show, together with the Patients Association, pays its respects to the extraordinary people who keep it going day after day. Matt Baker and Alex Jones present a special edition honouring and celebrating the inspirational work of those staff who continually deliver outstanding care to patients and their families, as nominated by viewers. Categories include the Children's and Young People's Care Award, the Healthcare Award, the Nursing and Midwifery Award, the Unsung Hero Award and the Lifetime Achievement Award.

The Bridge BBC2, 9pm
New series. The body of a woman is retrieved close to the bridge between Denmark and Sweden. It is found to be that of the Head of the Danish Immigration Board, whose staff had recently been filmed celebrating the success of a case deporting an Iranian homosexual who could face execution on his return.



Britain's Fat Fight with Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, Wednesday, BBC1, 9pm

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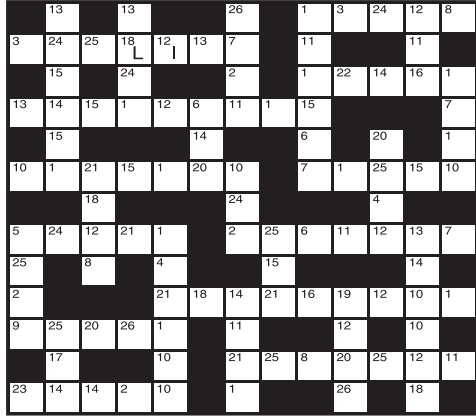


BRAIN GYM

No.478

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	A	L	N	H	K	P	G	I	V	J	M	C	B
14	Q	O	F	D	E	W	T	S	U	Z	X	R	Y

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

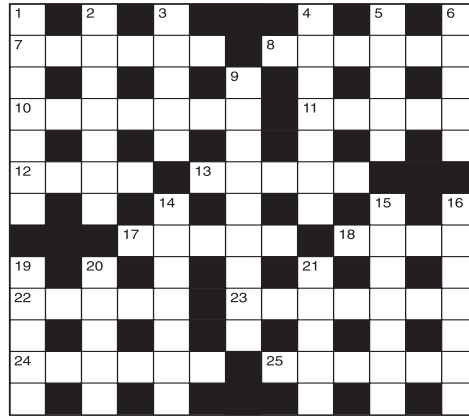
Cryptic Clues:

Across

7. Areas for a walk on board (6)
8. Foreign office (6)
10. Under it changes are yet to be made (7)
11. Come gradually to the point? (5)
12. Cheese that's made the wrong way (4)
13. Sober way to help (5)
17. Their accounts cannot be relied upon (5)
18. Broken knee produces a plaintive cry (4)
22. I'm illuminated round the edge (5)
23. Caviare might produce such greed (7)
24. Empty one container into another (6)
25. A small-holder in the fruit trade (6)

Down

1. Puts it on without being told? (7)
2. Not wholly biased (7)
3. Memorial of old priest outwardly Roman Catholic (5)
4. Support us in shame (7)
5. Hurry up, they're hard to fathom (5)
6. Extravagant when out and about (5)
9. Leaders of newspapers (9)
14. Nowhere near cool enough (7)
15. Draughtsman's intentions? (7)
16. Discovers something new in airways? (7)
19. Being made to work (5)
20. A spanking vessel? (5)
21. Number get a fever that's ill-defined (5)



Quick Clues:

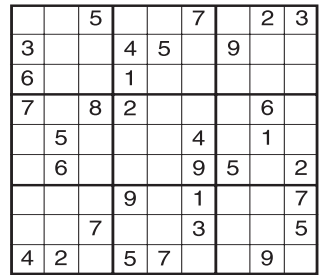
Across

7. Pick (6)
8. Bower (6)
10. Contain (7)
11. Boast (5)
12. Huge (4)
13. Scratch (5)
17. Hasten (5)
18. Solitary (4)
22. Slack (5)
23. Shorten (7)
24. Fix (6)
25. View (6)

Down

1. Accomplish (7)
2. Terse (7)
3. Outcome (5)
4. Courage (7)
5. Knave (5)
6. Banal (5)
9. Fickle (9)
14. Pacify (7)
15. Warrior (7)
16. Under (7)
19. Fissure (5)
20. Awaken (5)
21. Rely on (5)

Sudoku



Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

8	7	6	3	5	4	2	9	1
3	1	2	9	6	8	4	7	5
9	5	4	7	2	1	6	3	8
5	3	8	1	9	6	7	2	4
2	4	9	8	3	7	1	5	6
1	6	7	5	4	2	3	8	9
7	2	1	6	8	5	9	4	3
6	8	3	4	7	9	5	1	2
4	9	5	2	1	3	8	6	7

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
 CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Light; 4 Funeral; 8 Oration; 9 Monet; 10 Bede; 11 Clangour; 13 Mobs; 14 Stun; 16 Runner-up; 17 Draw; 20 Yacht; 21 Sleeper; 22 Useless; 23 Poles. Down: 1 Look before you; 2 Grand; 3 Trim; 4 Finale; 5 Nominative; 6 Rangoon; 7 Literary works; 12 Absentee; 13 Manacle; 15 Nurses; 18 Rape; 19 Leap.
 QUICK - Across: 1 Greed; 4 Chamfer; 8 Ascribe; 9 Fling; 10 Dull; 11 Acquaint; 13 Mean; 14 Snag; 16 Quagmire; 17 Pass; 20 Elude; 21 Survive; 22 Treason; 23 Press. Down: 1 Grandiloquent; 2 Excel; 3 Dais; 4 Clench; 5 Affluent; 6 Failing; 7 Righteousness; 12 Harmless; 13 Measure; 15 Prison; 18 Agile; 19 Grip.

Quiz

1. What is the Roman name for Odysseus?
2. Of which mountain range is Mount McKinley the highest?
3. Which John Travolta film won the Palme d'Or at Cannes in 1994?
4. What is the smallest US state?
5. Of which religion is a Parsee or Parsi a follower?
6. Which Brighton-based boxer once earned

- £10m in an eight-fight package with Sky TV?
7. Which race is the blue riband of the English horse-racing season?
8. Which film company merged with MGM in the '80s?
9. Which town in Greater Manchester includes Old Trafford cricket ground?
10. Which Hollywood star's first name is Eldred?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Pressure; 2 Diwali; 3 Castor and Pollux; 4 Navajo; 5 Under a judge; 6 Henley; 7 The Duchess of York; 8 Al Jolson; 9 Gerbil; 10 Apricot.
 Niner: SOBRIQUET

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

741782
87654928
3732662

gives an element,
gives a second element,
gives a scientific instrument.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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Tuck into feast from the Middle East

If you were to rank world cuisines on suitability for a first date then Lebanese would rank pretty low.

And that's not because it's a food that lacks sensuality. No, the problem with choosing a Lebanese restaurant for a first date is that you'll most certainly end up with a load of herbs in your teeth.

Eat a tabbouleh salad and smile afterwards at your peril; the likelihood of a second date will flash before your eyes. This salad isn't just heavy on parsley, it uses the grassy herb in Pavarotti-size proportions, only making way for a sprinkling of bulghur wheat, chopped tomatoes and spring onion.

Fattoush salads are pimped up with a garden's worth of parsley and mint, and let's not mention the cuisine's use of seeds. Jet black nigella seeds poke fun at diners with receding gums as they are liberally sprinkled on top of natural labné (strained yoghurt) while the ruby jewels of pomegranates are strewn on salads, stews and sauces.

FORTUNATE

And so it was rather fortunate that when I visited the new Birmingham branch of Comptoir Libanais I was not on a first date. Or a second or third date. It's safe to say that after more than 16 years together, me and the other half are well into harmonious, herb-munching, couldn't care less about the consequences territory. We eat garlic with gusto, curries without caution and carry breath mints rarely. It's a happy time.

Happier even since Comptoir Libanais opened in Grand Central.

Interiors are a riot of colour and eccentricity. Walls, decorated in bright Moorish tiles, are adorned with quirky artworks and gold etched plates. Baklava is piled high in the entrance and there are staff lingering



The food of a nation – Lebanese mezze plates



Comptoir Libanais has opened in Grand Central

outside, trying to entice customers into their cavernous lair.

Styled on a Beirut canteen, there's an open kitchen and the informal restaurant buzzes with noise, chatter and clatter of crockery.

The menu features hot and cold mezze plus wraps, salads and tagines as well as other Lebanese dishes such as roasted sea bass topped with spiced coriander, tomato and tahina sauce. The exotic ingredients – sumac, Damascus olives, tahini, labné, rose syrup, all made me wistful for far off lands. Let's run off to

Lebanon, I thought. Who says Lebanese food isn't romantic. As long as you don't mind herbs in your teeth, that is.

We chose the mezze platter for two featuring piles of falafels, grilled halloumi, tabbouleh and freekeh salads, pitta breads alongside pools of baba ghanouj and hummus. And a shed load of herbs.

We also ordered some lamb kibbeh, tasty lemon-shaped parcels of minced meat, cracked wheat, pine nuts and spices, and a piquant fattoush salad. It all looked as good as it tasted

With 20 minutes to spare before we needed to dash off to the cinema we decided to risk ordering dessert, struggling to choose between the plate of baklava, the date-syrup topped frozen yoghurt and the chocolate, orange and cardamom tart. So we ordered all three but were left a bit disappointed.

Although we were allocated a waitress, service was chaotic. The bill came to just over £43 which included four Diet Cokes and service charge – all reasonably good value.

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Top awards for Nissan Leaf and Micra

By James Parker

The European New Car Assessment Programme awarded the new Nissan Leaf with a stellar 5-star rating just a short time after the Nissan Micra won a major award.

The Leaf is the first car to be assessed against Euro NCAP's improved and extended protocols for 2018. The 2018 protocol sees the introduction of a raft of new tests which address key crash scenarios involving cars, pedestrians and now also the growing number of cyclists.

In these Euro NCAP tests, the Leaf earned a 93 per cent rating for adult safety and an 86 per cent rating for child protection. The safety rating is determined from a series of vehicle tests that, in a simplified way, reflect important real-life accident scenarios that could result in injuries.

Technology

The new Leaf 5-star rating reflects the advanced driver assistance systems packaged on the car. Technologies such as camera and radar feature extensively to provide benefits such as pedestrian recognition and form the basis of Nissan's acclaimed ProPILOT system for safer, more confident driving.

Gareth Dunsmore, electric vehicle director, Nissan Europe, explained: "The Euro NCAP announcement proves what we have known for a long time – that the new Nissan Leaf has exceptional safety standards and is a true pioneer in the EV space.

"This shows that our customers can fully trust our Nissan Intelligent Mobility vision, we



Winner of the Car of the Year accolade at the inaugural 2018 FirstCar awards, the Micra

are on a path to transform the way we drive and the way we live."

The announcement has been released just months after the Japan New Car Assessment Program also awarded the car the top 5-star grade following rigorous testing.

In earning the top rating, the Leaf scored 94.8 points out of a possible 100 for occupant safety in a collision.

The program is organized by Japan's Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and the National Agency for Automotive Safety and Victims' Aid. More details on that announcement can be found here.

The Nissan Micra has won the 'Car of the Year' accolade at the inaugural 2018 FirstCar awards. Micra has historically been a popular choice of car for learner and first time drivers due to its affordable pricing and compact practicality.

The Nissan Micra is packed with technology and powered by a range of efficient and responsive engines to inspire a confident and fun drive, making it a great choice for anyone starting their driving career.

FirstCar aims to encourage learner drivers while they prepare for their driving test and supports young drivers to make informed decisions after they gain their licence. With road-safety education at the forefront of the agenda for FirstCar, Micra delivers plenty of safety equipment and driver aids such as Intelligent Emergency Braking with pedestrian recognition, Intelligent Lane Intervention, Lane Departure Warning and High Beam Assist as standard.

David Motton, FirstCar editor and chairman of the judging panel, said: "You couldn't want for a better first car than the Micra.

"With low insurance group ratings and a range of efficient engines, the Nissan is



The new Nissan Leaf achieved a 5-star rating in NCAP awards

affordable to run. It's also equipped with the kind of safety features you'd expect of a much bigger and more expensive car.

"It's not just a safe and sensible choice. With a huge range of interior and exterior finishes, new drivers can really express themselves when specifying the car."

Alex Smith, managing director of Nissan GB, commented: "The Micra clearly ticks plenty of boxes for learner and young drivers. With advanced driver assistance systems as standard, over 100 personalisation

combinations, the unique BOSE Personal sound system and low tax and fuel costs, it's clear why Micra has been and will continue to be a logical and fun choice for younger drivers."

With emissions as low as 85g/km, fuel economy of up to 88.3 mpg and prices starting from just £12,400, the new Nissan Micra is unsurprisingly popular with younger drivers and represents a perfect balance of urban performance and low running costs.

Comfort is the new cool for Citroën's latest C4 Cactus



The film 'The Mug' showcases the busy morning routine of a father and his family

Citroën has revealed a new advertising campaign for the recently launched new C4 Cactus, the ultra-comfortable hatchback.

The campaign is inspired by people and their increasingly busy lives. The advert highlights all the benefits of Citroën's new suspension technology with Progressive Hydraulic Cushions™ (PHC™), which makes its European debut on the new C4 Cactus.

The film 'The Mug' showcases the busy morning routine of a father and his family.

Eating breakfast, dropping the children off at school and going to

work. Caught up in the morning rush, the father forgets his coffee on the roof of the car.

Due to the exceptional performance of Citroën's suspension with PHC™, the mug remains on the roof for his entire commute, which he then retrieves before rushing into the office.

This campaign demonstrates the brand's 'Inspired By You' positioning, because 'Citroën knows that life is hectic enough'.

Benefiting from the Citroën Advanced Comfort® programme, the new C4 Cactus is the first car

in the range with all of the Citroën Advanced Comfort® features. The ultra-comfortable hatch is the first model in Europe to feature Citroën's suspension with Progressive Hydraulic Cushions™, which creates a 'flying carpet' effect. It is also the first model in the world to offer Advanced Comfort® seats featuring new high-density foam that improves seating comfort for both the driver and passengers. There are 12 driver assistance systems and three connectivity technologies available as well as a wide range of efficient engines.

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Get up close and personal to the car

Here's what you should check when buying a used car

It's crucial to know what you're buying when picking up the keys to a used car. Here's what you should check.

Buying a used car can be a daunting experience. Without prior knowledge, selecting a vehicle from a list of thousands can prove to be a little overwhelming – and can prove costly if done incorrectly.

Fortunately, we've put together a list of the things you need to check when buying a used vehicle.

● Check its history

Once you've picked out a car you like from the classifieds, it's imperative that you check the car's history. Many companies provide this service for a small fee and require just the car's registration. You can also find out a vehicle's MOT history via the government's website, and this gives you an idea as to any faults the vehicle may have had, or still suffers from.

● Ask questions

Before you even go anywhere near the car, give the seller a ring and ask them about it. This could save you hundreds of pounds by eliminating the need to travel and see the car if it isn't quite right for you.

● Get up close and personal

Once you get to the car, it's time to give a thorough going over. Check that the engine isn't warm – this could be a sign that the owner is trying to hide some mechanical faults.

● Look out for rust spots on the arches – these are prone to corrosion – and check underneath the car's sills, too.

● Look under the bonnet

Of course, checking out the engine is a crucial part of the inspection process. Check the dipstick – is the oil fresh?

Also look around the oil filler cap – any white residue could potentially mean a blown head gasket, and could lead to thousands of pounds in repair bills. Make sure that you see receipts for any work that has been undertaken on the car too – this will give you a better idea about the state of its mechanicals.

● Check the interior

Does the interior of the car match the mileage? If the car has a beaten-up interior but has low miles, it could mean that the vehicle has been 'clocked', where the car's odometer is wound back. This is less prevalent in newer cars, but it's worth bearing in mind.

● Do the deal

If you've checked the car over, reviewed its history and feel happy with the overall package, then it's time to make an offer. Don't be afraid of pitching low – there's a good chance that the seller could take it, saving you thousands.

Remember to keep things amicable and, above anything, don't be afraid to walk away if you're not happy.



Look under the bonnet carefully

Arabian Nights and Days with the Amarok in Oman

By Jack Evans

Picture the scene: There's a two-tonne pick-up lodged in sand up to its axles, wheels spinning furiously while two people attempt to push it free. Welcome to Oman: The home of rocky valleys, dried-out riverbeds and – as we found – extremely deep sand dunes.

But let's take things back a little bit. Volkswagen wanted to showcase just what its Amarok pick-up – now featuring an even more powerful diesel engine – could do on some seriously difficult terrain, and this, as it happens, is what you find in Oman.

Day one would see us introduced to our trucks. Now, any pick-up looks good with plenty of off-road kit fitted to it, but the Amarok was exceptional. A snorkel, raised suspension and chunky all-surface tyres had been fitted to make the big VW more capable on awkward surfaces – and in truth it made the vehicle look seriously good.

Our first route would take in mostly motorways before leading up away from the sea at Fins and into the mountains. If you thought the UK was a hotbed for speed cameras, you need to go to Oman. There's a speed trap nearly every few miles on the motorway, and this means you're always pretty cautious about how quickly you're going.

The route quickly spikes up, heading into the Hajar Mountains. On tarmac, the Amarok remains predictably well refined, but it's on the loose gravel and dust of the mountain roads where it really shines. It manages to shimmy around and let you know that the surface is a little unstable, but it never feels like it's out of control.

As we arrived at the Salmah Plateau – our stopover point for the night – we were handed a pop-up tent, a sleeping bag and told to pick a rock-free spot on the ground. The surface was too hard to drive tent pegs into, so we ended up weighing the tents down with large boulders from nearby. Rough and ready, that's for sure, but it certainly reflected the ethos of the Amarok.

Our next day's driving would see us push further south into the country, heading towards the 1,000 Nights Camp in the middle of the desert.

The route was fringed at many points by wadis. These dried-out river beds are large and wide, and created by frequent torrents gushing down the mountains after heavy rainfall. We stop briefly in the middle of one as a guide tells us how many unsuspecting drivers leave their cars in the wadis and return after it's rained to find them completely washed away. Needless to say, we hurry onwards shortly afterwards.

After a quick stopover at midday we mount up once



The route for our triptook in long, dusty trails that snake through the desert

more and head towards the desert. Stopping at the small town of Al Mintarib on the outskirts, we drop the air pressure in the tyres. Lower tyres, after all, make for better traction on sand.

As we head out of the town, the tarmac quickly drops away and gives way to sand – lots and lots of sand.

Now, I'll happily admit that I haven't driven on sand before. Snow? Yes. Gravel? Forget about it. Sand, however, proved to be a new challenge.

Driving up the first incline, I got stuck. Wheels spinning, sending sand up into the air, there was little I could do to get moving. Thankfully, though, with a bit of pushing from some others in the group, I managed to get free.

After a few more successful dunes, a steeper incline appeared. I'd learnt by now that the best option was to hit the deeper sections as hard as possible – speed is a bit of an ally when it comes to sand driving, apparently.

Thankfully, the approach worked and the truck flew up the slope with little effort, though a large bump in the middle was – according to those stood watching – a result of the truck taking off from the ground. Maybe a little too much speed then...

At the top of the hill I leave the truck to have a look at the remaining Amaroks attempting the climb. Most make it to the top and move onwards, but some reach the summit and then immediately get stuck. Many get properly beached, and it takes a few hours to move them out.

By the time all the trucks are freed it's dark. Thankfully, our overnight stopover is in the middle of the dunes. The 1,000 Nights Camp proves to be the ideal place to park up after a long day.

The next day sees us rolling back to Muscat. The route takes in long, dusty trails that snake through the desert towards Al Mintarib. There, we reinflate the tyres and hit the tarmac.

After driving on sand for so long, firm ground seems strange – you're almost expecting it to shift around underneath you.

Arriving at our final hotel, I say goodbye to 'my' Amarok. With hundreds of miles covered and many difficult conditions conquered, it was a hard farewell. However, the big Volkswagen more than proved its worth, and showed that despite being comfortable and refined, it can more than take on the rough stuff.

Expect the unexpected out of town

Road safety and breakdown organisation GEM Motoring Assist is urging drivers to pay extra attention on rural road journeys this summer. Although traffic levels are generally lighter, rural roads account for nearly 60% of all fatalities (a total of 943 in 2015, compared with 577 on urban roads).

GEM road safety officer Neil Worth says: "Driving in the countryside is usually a great pleasure, with good views, quiet roads and a variety of interesting terrain.

"But a narrow, twisting road offers very little clue as to what might be round the next bend.

"That's why we're urging drivers to expect the unexpected and to make sure they have time and space to stop safely if necessary.

"What's round the corner on a rural road with restricted visibility?

"It could be another car or a motorcycle coming towards you too fast, a group of cyclists on a ride out, sheep or cattle crossing the road, a horse and rider, a wild animal, a slow-moving farm tractor...

"The point is that until you have perfect

sight of what's ahead, you need to be ready to anticipate what could be there.

"By adjusting your speed and your position accordingly, you're doing your bit to keep yourself and the other road users safe."

GEM has prepared a selection of simple driver tips to help improve rural road safety:

● Make sure you use any existing signage to help you.

Usual signs include a series of white chevron signs on a black background, indicating a sharp bend.

Slow down, even if the posted speed limit is 30 mph.

● The narrowness of country lanes means that passing places are sometimes provided into embankments or verges.

Be prepared to reverse into these if necessary.

● Stay safe by never exceeding the signed limit.

Country lanes are often used as a short cut or an escape from congested main roads.

Using them may actually be a longer way round to your destination leading you to be in a hurry. Slow down.



Be aware of what be around the corner

● Country lanes may be in a poor state of repair. At any sign of this be ready for pot-holes and other broken surfaces that can seriously damage your vehicle.

● Give horse riders a very slow and wide berth and keep your distance until it becomes safe to pull past.

Follow GEM on Twitter @MotoringAssist



Colin Brazier and Mel Eves sign shirts



Ex-boss Graham Turner with former players Robbie Dennison and Andy Thompson



Chairman of the Former Players' Association Richard Green



Phil Parkes, Willie Carr and Steve Kindon meet up again



Dave Jones and Graham Turner with host Sky Sports presenter Johnny Phillips

Former star Eves: Wolves golden days here again

SPORTING FEATURE

By Tim Spiers

"It is really heart-warming to see as a Wolves fan that we are back in the Premier League."

WOLVES legend Mel Eves says this season has been 'one of the best' in recent years after the club won the Championship title and promotion to the Premier League.

The former striker, who netted 44 league goals for the club during a nine-year spell in which he played 180 games, declared the football under Nuno Espirito Santo a joy to watch this season.

Wolves were crowned the Championship winners after thrashing Bolton 4-0.

Eves spoke during the 30th anniversary dinner of the Wolves Former Players' Association at Molineux on April 19.

Shrewd

Eves, who later represented the likes of Sheffield United and Gillingham, said: "It has been an absolute joy this season to watch the football on show.

"It has been one of the best seasons that I think most people can remember, certainly since the team were doing really well.

"Under Mick McCarthy we did well but we were really surviving. We weren't expected to do nothing more than be OK.

"The Fosun group, they mean business. But you also have to be very shrewd in the players that you bring in, the manager you bring in, and the way you



Kenny Hibbitt, Derek Parkin and Norman Bell at the 30th anniversary dinner

integrate everything and get everyone singing off the same hymn sheet.

"From the original 1950s team, Wolves were the best in Europe let alone this country.

"That is why Wolves have got their heritage and why older guys, like me and generations gone by, appreciate Wolves are a big club.

"Make no mistake about it, they are a big club.

"It is really heart-warming to see as a Wolves fan that we are back in the Premier League.

"Congratulations to everyone involved at Wolves from the top down.

"The manager Nuno, the fans love him, everyone loves him."

Former Wolves players turned out in force for the special event.

Among them was former defender Jody Craddock, an artist who has painted portraits of the current

players, which have been used on the covers of match day programmes.

Craddock said: "It is brilliant to come along. I enjoy catching up with all the old players

"It has been a tremendous season and we have played some superb football.

"It is nice to be involved in such a fantastic season. When I started (my artwork) I didn't realise we would get promoted but it has worked out fantastic. To be asked to do it is an honour.

"That will be part of history now forever. It is nice for me as an artist and an ex-player."

Former goalkeeper Phil Parkes said: "It is great to be here, all the lads get back together.

"It has been a different type of football this past season.

"What the club have done this season has been fantastic."

Coady: Players will miss Premier derby

WOLVES captain Conor Coady says winning the Championship is 'the best feeling in the world' - but admits he would miss the atmosphere of a derby should no West Midlands rivals join them in the Premier League.

The 25-year-old admits the players are 'a little bit disappointed' there would be no Black Country derby if the Baggies are relegated.

Coady, speaking as a guest of BBC Radio Merseyside in his home city of Liverpool, said: "It's the best feeling in the world (to be champions), to get promoted that weekend. But to beat Bolton 4-0 knowing we'd already been promoted, and the performance the boys put in just shows the character they've got."

But he added he would have loved to take on Black Country rivals Albion. "You want to play West Brom, as a Wolves player, as a Wolves fan," he said. "They all want to play West Brom, we really do.

"We want to play them and experience that atmosphere because we all know what it can be like."

Heart rules head to keep Heathens racing

CRADLEY Heathens bosses have revealed how they let the heart rule the head to keep the club in action this season.

Club director Nigel Pearson told a packed fans forum organised by the Heathens Supporters Trust how they were within a whisker of closing last October after eight seasons at National League level.

No new home track, fewer dates available at Wolverhampton and financial losses when staging home meetings at Birmingham left the club in crisis. But Pearson said: "My head told me to close the club and I think the same applied to my colleagues. However, the heart told me different.

"We still have a loyal fanbase and fantastic support from Dean and Adam Bridge at Motor Market, plus the tremendous partnership with Dr Rod Brooks. The last three seasons have been tough, the fact is when we have to host meetings away from Monmore it doesn't work financially."

Pearson also answered fans' questions on the long term and whether the management were still committed to a new track.

Footballers hoping to score with charity

TWO brothers hope a five-a-side football tournament will prove a winner for charity. Gurcharan and Herjinder Bhujhangy, of Halesowen, are organising the tournament in aid of the British Heart Foundation.

It takes place at Goals, Cakemore Road, Blackheath, on Saturday, June 3.

Teams can enter a maximum of seven players per team, with adult teams costing £70 and children's teams at £30. Register at Goals on 0121 561 3000 or via Gurcharan on 07762 521584 before May 21.

This is the third time the brothers have organised the annual event for the BHF. The fundraising total for 2017 was £1,075. They originally supported the BHF as a result of losing their father Dalbir Khanpur Bhujhangy, aged 59, as a result of heart failure in November 2008. He was part of the legendary Bhujhangy bhangra group, formed in Smethwick in 1967. Tragically, the brothers have since also lost a friend, Harman Dhani, 37.

Gurcharan said: "This football tournament is a tribute to these two great men."



Stablemate tips 'Bomber' for title glory

FRESH from a win at Villa Park in March, boxer Shaka Thompson faces a quick turnaround as he features on the Jason Worn/Tommy Langford undercard at Walsall Town Hall tomorrow night (Friday).

Super middleweight Thompson features on BCB Promotions' 'Neutral Ground' show, with Tivdale's Welborn and Birmingham's Langford top of the bill in a British title clash.

Thompson trains at the same gym as British middleweight champion Langford - aka The Baggies Bomber - and is confident his stablemate will get the job done. "It's a very entertaining match up," said Thompson.

"I've seen Jason Welborn box before. He is a tough, come forward boxer but I train alongside Tommy everyday and I believe he will be coming out the victor."

Thompson added he was keen to show off his abilities in front of a large crowd.

"It's beneficial for me to be back in the ring as soon as I am because it allows me to be sharp and grow with experience. At the moment I'm still in the early stages of my pro career, I'm only 22 so I've got time on my side."

Tickets, for Langford versus Welborn, priced at £50 standard unreserved and £150 VIP ringside, are on sale at 0845 111 2900.

The undercard also features Rowley Regis' Tyler Denny, Doncaster heavy-weight and two-time Commonwealth title challenger Dave Allen, Walsall featherweight Rachel Ball, Swadincote super welterweight Ross Hollis and Birmingham super lightweight Kane Baker.

Weather leaves captain frustrated

HALESOWEN Cricket Club were once again thwarted by the weather with all the Saturday league games falling victim to the atrocious spring weather.

Captain Alexei Kervezee was in a sombre mood after the weekend washout. He said: "It's tough on all of the players at the moment as we just want to get started."

"We have had 10 weeks indoors, a great pre-season bonding trip to Bristol and some outdoor nets and fielding but we need to get moving now."

This week Halesowen welcome fellow promoted outfit Oswestry to Seth Somers Park.

Kervezee added: "We will be looking to start with a strong performance and especially as we have our local rivals Old Hill in the ECB National Knockout the following day."

The seconds visit Penkridge, 12.30pm; Stourbridge host the third XI, 1pm and the fourths are at home, at Earls High, against Stourbridge at 1pm.

Sunday's ECB National Knockout tie starts at 12.30pm. The game could be switched to Halesowen if the Old Hill pitch is unplayable.

Yeltz ease to win over fellow strugglers

Halesowen 2 Stalybridge Celtic 0

HALESOWEN eased to a two-goal victory as the two sides immediately above the bottom met in the final game of a difficult season.

The weary visitors had played nine games in the previous fortnight as Steve Burr ended his reign as Celtic manager with another defeat.

Halesowen had the better of the first half but were unable to break the deadlock. Lee Hughes laid the ball off for Dan Byrnes but his 11th minute shot was deflected away.

Midway through the first half Hughes cut in

from the left but goalkeeper Aiden Winterbottom gathered cleanly. Little was seen from Celtic although Jake Charles crossed from the left in the 26th minute and Harrison Holgate blasted the loose ball over.

Stalybridge struggled from set-pieces all afternoon and the Yeltz went close from two further corners late in the first half.

Jordan Goddard's 35th minute delivery was helped on to Hughes, but Holgate headed off the line.

Four minutes later another Goddard corner

was headed on by Kyle Morrison for Hughes to head into the side-netting.

Hughes was penalised after handling the ball into the net in the 55th minute and Ahmed Ali stroked just wide from the edge of the area a minute later.

The Yeltz finally grabbed a 57th minute lead when Hughes played a ball into the danger area and the ball was knocked back for super-sub Roland Agbor to find the bottom corner.

Ali powered a 67th minute header home directly from Jack Kelly's corner to make it 2-0.

MOORE ALBION UNCERTAINTY

DARREN MOORE says he is still not thinking about becoming Albion's full-time head coach despite extending his unbeaten run as caretaker boss to four games.

The Baggies beat Newcastle United 1-0 at St James' Park on Saturday to again prolong their relegation to the Championship. Matt Phillips hit the winner, with Albion also keeping a second successive clean sheet.

Moore has now picked up eight points from his first four games, which is as many as Alan Pardew mustered from 18 league fixtures.

The caretaker boss has beaten two Champions League winning managers in Jose Mourinho and Rafa Benitez along the way and has now been nominated for the Manager of the Month.

Albion have begun to contact candidates for the vacant post and calls to consider Moore for the position are growing louder from an adoring fanbase.

However, he is refusing to get carried away. Moore said: "I'm answering a situation and it genuinely honestly is on to the next game, that's how I've approached it."

Ben Foster, meanwhile, hopes Albion's resurgence under Moore will encourage his teammates to stick around instead of jumping ship.

The goalkeeper, who has already publicly pledged his future to the Baggies for next season, alongside fellow senior player Chris Brunt, hopes the positive end to the season will give others contemplating their future second thoughts.

"I hope this run will have convinced a few more players to stick around and help the cause even if we do have to bring a few more players in," Foster said.



Darren Moore

Winning Double for racing pair



Wright, centre left, and Siviter, proudly take the top step. Picture: Alex James Photography

IT was business as usual for the Double Two Racing boys - minus some of the occasional drama - as the team raced to another victory.

Black Country pair Pete Wright and Martyn Siviter made it back-to-back wins after two rounds of the No Limits Endurance championship at Cadwell Park in Lincolnshire.

Wright, from Tivdale, started seventh on the grid but first in the Club 600 class in the three-hour race. A third of the way into his stint, Wright was passed by eventual National 600 winners Pertemps Racing. Sponsorship team Track Prep Racing pulled off a cracking 20-second

pit stop and sent Siviter, from Blackheath, on his way to chase down Pertemps' Colin Norris.

Siviter was holding first in the Club 600 class by two laps, and sitting third in National 600 while catching Pertemps every lap but peeled into the pit lane to send Wright out for his second stint.

The Track Prep team cut the pit stop time down to 17 seconds to send Siviter on his way in spitting rain. His lap times started picking up and he bought the team home first in Club 600, third in National 600 and ninth overall.

Leon takes honours at Glassboys

GLASSBOYS' veteran Leon Broadhurst swept the boards at Stourbridge FC's end of season presentation.

The long-serving midfielder, who has notched up 730 games in Glassboys colours, was the club's top scorer with 19 goals, and at Saturday's ceremony, which followed a 2-1 win over play-off hopefuls Warrington, Broadhurst took home a clutch of awards.

Broadhurst, who scored on Saturday, along with Luke Benbow, was named 'Players' Player of the Year; Manager's Player of the Year; the Committee/Directors

Player of the Year (in memory of Alan Pitt); Supporters' Player of the Year and also picked up the award for most 'Man of the Match' wins (in memory of Steve Hickman). Karl Clifton won the 'Club-man of the Year' award.

Meanwhile, boss Gary Hackett was left to rue a number of costly late goals over the season as Glassboys finished 12th in the Evo-Stik Premier, although they could still lift the Birmingham Senior Cup. They take on Hednesford Town in the final at St Andrew's next Tuesday.

Hackett said: "If we hadn't conceded those goals we would probably be looking at 10 or 15 points more and we would have been around the play-offs."

Meanwhile, defender Darryl Westlake and youth team captain Jake Evans have signed new contracts for 2018/19.

Heathens off but now back on track

CRADLEY Heathens are back in action next week.

The Heathens race against Stoke Poters in the National Trophy at Monmore Green, on Bank Holiday Monday, May 7, at 7.30pm.

It is the side's first meeting of the season after Sunday's National Trophy fixture against Coventry at Leicester was postponed due to a waterlogged track.

A new date for the fixture is to be confirmed.

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★★★

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